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MANILA BULLETIN:

Public governance system (Part 2)

PEACE BY PEACE

BY SECRETARY CARLITO G. GALVEZ, JR.

Jul 8, 2024 06:07 AM



Indices, ratings, and other numbers are guide posts of our successes and failures. Our country's global competitiveness standing, for example, is gauged by two major annual studies – the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Competitiveness Report and the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) World Competitiveness Yearbook (WCY). For 2024, for example, we were ranked at 54th out of 137 economies by the WEF and 52nd out of 64 countries in the WCY.

In his speech at his assumption as Multi-Sector Governance Council (MSGC) chair, Bill Luz cited the Philippine rating of 0.52 in the Human Capital Index (HCI). The HCI is “an annual measurement prepared by the World Bank” to measure a country's capability in mobilizing their human capital. . . The index measures how much capital each country loses through lack of education and health.”

Among the other prominent indices used globally include the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) which explores the dimensions of long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living; and, the Global Peace Index that is presented annually by the think-tank Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP).

All indices and ratings are measured using a system of indicators. The Global Peace Index, for example, is analyzed using indicators classified into the three domains of peacefulness. The three domains are ongoing domestic and international conflict (with measures like “number and duration of internal conflict,” “deaths from internal organized conflict,” etc.), societal safety and security (e.g. “number of refugees and internally displaced people,” “political instability,” “number of jailed populations,” etc.), and Militarization (e.g. “ease of access to small arms,” “military expenditure as a percentage of GDP,” etc.).

The WCY, on the other hand, uses 338 indicators to evaluate national competitiveness. The 338 indicators are classified across four main factors with five sub-factors each. The four factors are economic performance, government efficiency, business efficiency, and infrastructure.

The indicators are important to OPAPRU in at least two ways – first, they provide a reference in determining priorities, and second, a certain degree of validation at a grander scale can be seen in the measurements although our interventions are delivered to regions and the localities.

The challenge is how to overlay the grand indices in the strategic and work plans of OPAPRU. Although we cater to local and regional areas, our activities should contribute to the national interests. We respond to questions like – are we creating employment that contributes to the relatively high ranking in the Employment sub-factor (10th)? How much impact do we generate with the infrastructure development we deliver to BARMM given that our current ranking in Infrastructure (61st) is at the bottom? Are our programs for healing and active awareness of gender in line with our good performance (16th) in the Global Gender Gap Index?

With PGS, we are positive about the direction that our journey is headed to. Our strategic objectives shall be steered with the aid of metrics developed with key principles of managing information. The “right” use of the “right” technology will apply in setting our plans. The “right” use of the “right” technology will also apply in working and monitoring our plans. At the foundation, the determinants of our decision-making process are information and information systems. We are currently reviewing, organizing, and stocktaking to kick off this task that we have set for us.

In the late stages of my military career, I saw and experienced how PGS reinforced the mindset of our soldiers. The adoption of individual and organizational scorecards and the monitoring and evaluation of a third party (as embodied in the PGS) proved to be effective in instituting positive change. Both individual and collective change in our members and co-workers are of the utmost importance as the human capital is the most valuable resource of any organization.

We are privileged that our new MSGC has been formalized. Every member who accepted our invitation brings their expertise to provide strategic guidance in the pursuit of our agency’s organizational transformation.

Again, our profoundest appreciation to Guillermo ‘Bill’ Luz for agreeing to chair the MSGC. His renowned leadership especially for causes that are very critical for building a nation will surely result in synergies among and between the other members of this team.

Vice Chairman Austere A. Panadero, now in the private sector, was undersecretary of the

Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). He is our champion in capacity building and localization of convergence efforts. Ms. Amina Rasul-Bernardo, is one of the leading Muslim leaders in the Philippines and has always worked to strengthen peace and development as she promotes human rights, justice, and democratic practices in Muslim Mindanao.

Undersecretary Maria Catalina E. Cabral will surely provide the perspective for infrastructure development among her other areas of specialization. Professor Jasmin N. Galace, PhD will lead us to a robust program of peace education.

Evaristo S. Francisco played a key role in the rollout of our Covid vaccination program. As the top executive of the Institute for Solidarity in Asia, the organization that introduced PGS as a flagship program, Titoy shall be a mentor to all of us. Dr. Cameron P. Odsey's vast experience with the Department of Agriculture brings a deep knowledge of the primary industry that creates livelihood and provides food to our focus areas.

Professor Manuel J. De Vera, PhD. of the Asian Institute of Management is a public policy expert and a leadership advocate. He molds the minds of both business and public managers.

Peace is the foundation of development and our PGS journey will institutionalize the gains of peacebuilding. The work for peace and development is intergenerational and transcends administrations and political priorities. That is the thought that went with the aspiration to institutionalize peacebuilding through the establishment of a stable Department of Peace.

(Secretary Carlito G. Galvez, Jr., is the presidential adviser on peace, reconciliation and unity. He advises the President on the implementation of the Philippine Comprehensive Peace Process.)

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/8/public-governance-system-part-2>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Empowering farmers through renewable energy: The ACEN and SariSuki collaboration

BY IGNACIO R. BUNYE

Jul 8, 2024 06:08 AM

SPEAKING OUT



In a groundbreaking move, ACEN and SariSuki have joined forces to launch the Agro-Circularity in Renewable Energy (ACRE) program, a visionary initiative aimed at uplifting local farmers in ACEN's host communities. This collaboration is not just a testament to the power of synergy between agriculture and renewable energy but also a model for sustainable development and food security in the Philippines.

The ACRE program is set to revolutionize the agricultural landscape by providing farmers with essential training and support. By cultivating suitable crops within ACEN's renewable energy sites, farmers can enhance the market value of their produce and streamline the supply chain. This initiative introduces modern farm management practices and essential skills such as crop selection and basic business practices, ensuring that farmers are well-equipped to thrive in a competitive market.

ACEN, the energy platform of the Ayala Group, has long been a pioneer in renewable energy projects, with a goal of achieving 20 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030. By integrating agriculture into their renewable energy sites, ACEN is promoting responsible land use

while contributing to the Philippines' clean energy transition. This innovative approach not only maximizes land utility but also supports local communities by providing them with sustainable livelihoods.

SariSuki, an online platform founded by Brian Cu, has been instrumental in transforming the agricultural supply chain in the Philippines. By connecting microentrepreneurs and farmers directly with consumers, SariSuki ensures fair prices and efficient access to fresh produce. The partnership with ACEN amplifies SariSuki's impact, enabling farmers to reach broader markets and improve their profitability.

The ACRE program is more than just an agricultural initiative; it is a holistic approach to sustainability. By improving agricultural infrastructure and ensuring efficient market access, the program addresses critical challenges faced by farmers. This collaboration exemplifies how responsible land use and innovative solutions can drive economic growth and enhance food security.

The partnership between ACEN and SariSuki is a perfect model of how collaboration can lead to transformative change. By combining the strengths of renewable energy and agriculture, the ACRE program is paving the way for a more sustainable and prosperous future for local farmers. This initiative not only supports the livelihoods of farmers but also contributes to the broader goals of sustainability and food security in the Philippines. It is a model that other sectors should look to emulate, demonstrating that with the right partnerships, we can achieve remarkable progress.

Unlocking potential and shaping tomorrow's leaders at Ayala group

The Ayala Group recently welcomed a new cohort of 93 college and university students into the refreshed Ayala Group Summer Internship Program (AGSIP), a transformative initiative designed to identify and nurture promising young individuals with exceptional potential to become future industry leaders.

The interns, hailing from top institutions in the Philippines and abroad, are about to embark on an exciting journey within one of the country's largest and most enduring conglomerates.

AGSIP goes beyond the traditional internship experience. It's not just about clocking hours; it's about preparing these young talents for the future. As Francisco Romero Milán, chief human resources officer of Ayala Corporation, aptly puts it: "AGSIP is more than just about an internship. It is about helping (them) become not just professionals but valuable contributors to society."

During the intensive eight-week program, AGSIP interns will be deployed across 20 different companies within the Ayala group. Among the participating companies are Ayala Land, Bank of the Philippine Islands, Globe Group, ACEN, AC Health, AC Logistics, ACMobility, Asticom, GCash and Ayala Foundation, Inc.

The interns will dive into critical functional units, engage in real-world missions, and receive mentorship from seasoned professionals. This hands-on exposure will equip them with practical skills and insights, laying the groundwork for their future careers.

Cezar Consing, Ayala Corporation's president & CEO, welcomed the interns to one of the most exciting companies in the country. Consing said that Ayala's commitment extends beyond the internship period. Even if the interns don't end up working with Ayala, they'll leave with a toolkit of skills and experiences that set them apart. This program is Ayala's pledge to shape the future workforce, ensuring that these young talents thrive wherever their career paths lead.

Consing encouraged the interns to make the most of this opportunity. "Find meaning, understand corporate life, learn how companies like ours operate," he advised. "The connections made during AGSIP, the people met, and the lessons learned will resonate throughout your lives. To the incoming summer interns: Enjoy these eight weeks—it's a stepping stone toward a bright future."

AGSIP runs from June 20 to Aug. 9, 2024 and the Ayala Group eagerly awaits the impact these interns will make. (totingbunye2000@gmail.com)

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/8/empowering-farmers-through-renewable-energy-the-acen-and-sari-suki-collaboration>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

‘P29/kilo rice giving false hope to poor’

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

July 8, 2024 | 12:00am



Individuals line up for affordable rice sold at P29 per kilo at the Kadiwa store inside the National Irrigation Administration Office in Quezon City on July 5, 2024.

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — By selling rice at P29 per kilo in Kadiwa outlets, the Department of Agriculture (DA) is giving false hope to the poor, the farmers’ group Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. (PCAFI) said yesterday.

Danilo Fausto, PCAFI president, said the move is not sustainable since the DA’s subsidy is pegged at P20 per kilo or at P220 million per day.

Fausto said in an interview with The STAR that the P29-per-kilo rice is more of a political move and was implemented possibly in preparation for President Marcos’ State of the Nation Address (SONA) this month.

“I’m afraid they might be creating false hope for the poor because I doubt the sustainability of the program,” Fausto said, referring to DA officials. “It is definitely a political move, maybe in preparation for the SONA. In terms of economic (aspect), it is impossible to sustain.”

Fausto noted that based on his conversation with National Food Authority Administrator Larry Lacson, the NFA can provide only the initial rice supply for the program.

“The NFA can only release the stocks that are about to expire so we are talking about those procured in April. The problem is, that is only 49,000 metric tons,” Fausto said.

According to Fausto, the DA needs at least 11,000 metric tons per day to support the P29/kilo rice for the vulnerable sectors – senior citizens, persons with disabilities, Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program beneficiaries and solo parents.

“They bought this rice at a higher price between P45 and P50 per kilo and you will sell it at P29 (per kilo). More or less the subsidy is P20 per kilo. If you will provide P29 per kilo of rice to 30 percent income percentile, that is about 11,000 metric tons per day or 11 million kilos of rice per day. Multiply that by P20 per kilo, that’s the minimum subsidy per day,” Fausto said, referring to the P220-million losses for the government per day.

The DA started on Friday the simultaneous implementation of the large-scale trial of the P29 Rice program in 10 Kadiwa centers in Metro Manila and Bulacan.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier said the program would also cover Visayas and Mindanao by late August or early September.

“Where will the money come from? The stock of the NFA is only 70,000 metric tons. If you are talking of 37,000 metric tons (of aging stocks), that is only good for two days. The NFA cannot release the stocks procured in May and June as, if there would be calamities, where will you get the supply?” Fausto explained.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said the DA targets to expand the availability of the P29-per-kilo rice to five days from the current three days.

“From three days – Friday, Saturday, Sunday – eventually it will be increased to five days from Wednesday to Sunday. Monday and Tuesday will be the rest days and for the restocking of supplies,” De Mesa said.

He gave assurance that the implementation of the program would continue until the end of Marcos’ term in 2028.

De Mesa said the efforts to bring down the retail price of rice would further bring down inflation in the country. “We expect in the beginning of July, the inflation will go down because of the base effect of the P29-per-kilo price of rice.”

He added that at least 30 percent of the country's population will benefit from the program.

The initial 10 Kadiwa stores that sell rice at P29 per kilo are at the 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, Disiplina Village in Valenzuela and Brgy. Minuyan proper in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/07/08/2368513/p29kilo-rice-giving-false-hope-poor>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

‘High tomato price to stay amid rainy season’

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

July 8, 2024 | 12:00am



PCAFI president Danilo Fausto said that rain affects the growth of tomatoes and other vegetables as well as their prices.

[Philstar.com](#) / Irra Lising

MANILA, Philippines — The high retail price of tomatoes is expected to remain with the onset of the rainy season, according to farmers’ group Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc.

PCAFI president Danilo Fausto said that rain affects the growth of tomatoes and other vegetables as well as their prices.

He said the Department of Agriculture (DA) should address the lack of post-harvest facilities to ensure that tomatoes are preserved during peak harvest season.

“The solution is still the post-harvest, like converting tomatoes into tomato paste, tomato sauce,” he said.

Earlier, the DA said tomato prices would go down in the next two weeks.

DA Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa last week said the retail price of tomatoes would return to its previous level of P80 per kilo.

As these developed, Fausto urged the DA to distribute for free the African swine fever (ASF) vaccine to backyard hog raisers once it is commercially released in the market.

Fausto said the commercial availability of the vaccine would eradicate ASF.

The DA expects the Food and Drug Administration to approve the commercial distribution of ASF vaccine this month.

Fausto said 60 percent of the country’s pork supply comes from backyard hog raisers.

He said commercial pork producers could shoulder the cost of the ASF vaccine that would be given for free to backyard hog raisers.

De Mesa gave assurance that the mass testing of the vaccine would be transparent. He said there are still ASF outbreaks in various areas in the country.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/07/08/2368524/high-tomato-price-stay-amid-rainy-season>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA OKs P510 million fuel subsidy to farmers

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

July 8, 2024 | 12:00am



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he issued a memorandum order that approved the distribution of fuel subsidies to farmers owning or renting machinery used in crop, livestock and poultry productions.

[Philstar.com / File](#)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) has approved the release of over P510 million in fuel subsidy to about 160,000 farmers owning machinery to help them cope with the high fuel costs.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he issued a memorandum order that approved the distribution of fuel subsidies to farmers owning or renting machinery used in crop, livestock and poultry productions.

The distribution of the fuel subsidy could start later this month, according to the DA.

“This initiative aims to alleviate the financial burden on farmers amid the rising cost of fuel,” Tiu Laurel said yesterday.

“This is just one of the several assistance projects that the Marcos administration provides to ease the burden of our farmers, the unsung heroes of our economy and the main pillar of our food security goal,” he added.

The government allocated P510.447 million for the fuel subsidy project this year. The implementation project is being undertaken by the DA through its Bureau of Agricultural and Fisheries Engineering and regional field offices.

Under the project, each registered farmer in the Registry System for Basic Sectors of Agriculture with agricultural machinery and equipment will receive a fuel subsidy of P3,000.

The distribution of these subsidies will be facilitated through assistance cards provided by the Development Bank of the Philippines and its financial technology partners, according to the DA.

The release of the fuel subsidy to the target beneficiaries is contingent upon the Department of Energy’s certification that the average monthly price of Dubai crude oil per barrel has reached \$80, based on the Mean of Platts Singapore.

The DA noted that Dubai crude oil prices have exceeded \$80 per barrel – fluctuating between \$78.48 and \$86.50 – from June 3 to July 1.

“This development indicates that the distribution of the fuel subsidy could commence later in July,” it said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/07/08/2368436/da-oks-p510-million-fuel-subsidy-farmers>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Rice tariff collections up 34% to P23 billion in H1

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

July 8, 2024 | 12:00am



Workers unload sacks of rice from a delivery truck along Dagupan Street in Tondo, Manila on January 22, 2024.

STAR / Ernie Penaredondo

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MANILA, Philippines — Rice tariff collections in the first semester rose by more than a third on a yearly basis to over P23 billion, driven by elevated import volume coupled by higher import prices, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) said.

Preliminary BOC data showed the agency collected P23.193 billion in tariffs from January to June, about 34 percent higher than the P17.28 billion collected in the same period last year.

BOC data indicated that rice tariff collections this year were lifted by the 23.63 percent year-on-year rise in import volume, coupled by higher declared import prices by importers that saw a nearly 35 percent increase.

The country imported 2.284 million metric tons (MT) of rice during the reference period, some 436,000 MT more than last year's 1.848 million MT recorded volume.

The average price of imported rice during the six-month period was at \$512.35 per MT, 34.79 percent higher than the \$380.11 per MT average quotation a year ago.

Global rice prices remain elevated this year as tightness in world supply persists amid the continued export restriction by India on its non-Basmati rice stocks.

The average price of Vietnam's five percent broken rice – the most common variety bought by Philippine importers – in the first half rose by 26 percent year-on-year to \$582 per MT from \$461.2 per MT last year, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization.

The depreciation of the local currency against the dollar also contributed to the higher rice tariff collections. The average foreign exchange rate in the first half was at P56.76 to \$1, about 2.68 percent weaker compared to the \$55.28:\$1 exchange rate last year, based on BOC data.

Raul Montemayor of the Federation of Free Farmers said rice imports are expected to surge once the reduced tariff rate of 15 percent is implemented by the government.

However, Montemayor said, this would be at the cost of tariff collections.

“The import volume has to more than double to generate the same (tariff collections as last year), which seems improbable,” he told The STAR.

Rice tariff collections last year reached a record high of nearly P30 billion on the back of 3.6 million MT of imported stocks.

Rice tariff collections have been critical in recent years or since the passage of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) in 2019 since all tariffs collected by the government are earmarked for the development of the local rice industry through the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

Both the legislative and executive branches of the government are deliberating the extension of the RCEF for another six years to further improve Filipino rice farmers' competitiveness.

Part of the deliberations is how much would be the new earmarked budget for RCEF and how it would be financed should there be any shortfalls in tariff collections. At present, RCEF has a guaranteed budget of P10 billion.

Sen. Cynthia Villar, principal author of RTL, said the rice tariff reduction to 15 percent would cause tariff collections to plunge by 60 percent.

Villar noted that the P30 billion rice tariff collection last year would drop to P12 billion under the new tariff rate.

“That is why I am talking to the Department of Finance (DOF) on who will finance the difference,” she said.

The Department of Agriculture is of the view that any differences between the earmarked fund of RCEF and tariff collections must be shouldered by the government.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/07/08/2368439/rice-tariff-collections-34-p23-billion-h1>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Putting the spotlight on Pinoy entrepreneurs

[RAZZLE-DAZA](#) - [Pat Perez](#) - The Philippine Star

July 8, 2024 | 12:00am



Beautiful product displays and yummy treats await shoppers at the DTI Food Fair.

ADVERTISEMENT

Upon the invitation of Cris Roque, Undersecretary for the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development Group, I attended the 10th DTI-Bagong Pilipinas National Food Fair in SM Megamall's Megatrade Hall last week. The fair was organized to create more avenues and platforms for MSMEs to showcase and sell their food and beverage products so they can become more competitive entrepreneurs. By giving them tools like financial support through the Small Business (SB) Corporation — a lending bank chaired by Usec. Cris exclusively for MSMEs — these entrepreneurs now have an even better chance to succeed locally and internationally.



Colorful handmade bags to stuff all the food treats are also available at the fair.

I was glad I caught the keynote speech of Usec. Cris, who was understandably excited and proud to celebrate a decade of showcasing the very best Filipino MSME products. The trade fair is a testament to the unwavering spirit of the food industry and its vital role in nation building. The Bagong Pilipinas mantra of the current administration espouses innovation, excellence, and cooperation to create a sustainable, inclusive, and vibrant economy. And what better way for us citizens to help than by patronizing our very own MSMEs, whose products comprise 99 percent of all businesses and are thus the very backbone of the Philippine economy?



Packaging ideas for MSMEs.

As I went around and did my best to visit the 200 booths showcasing the cuisine of all 16 Philippine regions, I was amazed by how far the Filipino has come as an entrepreneur, and how consumers have also become more discerning and supportive of our own products. Based on the packaging, quality, and taste of the items displayed at the fair, it's evident that Philippine products can be counted as among the world's best.



Cris Roque, Undersecretary for the Department of Trade and Industry's MSME Development Group, who once upon a time started as an MSME herself.

So much did I enjoy the bottled spreads such as tinapa, dulong, sardines and cheese pimiento — not to mention the wide assortment of artisanal coffee and chocolates — that it was hard to make up my mind as to what to try and buy! There were also stalls selling enticing native fruit juices like mango, dalandan, calamansi, guyabano, buko, and more. There was also no way to avoid sweets like piyaya, napaleones, barquillos, and dried mangoes, and assorted chips like cassava, potato, kang kong, kamote, malunggay, and carrots.

As an added come-on, there were fresh fruits and vegetables for sale at the entrance which were being sold for less than their market prices. For plantitas, the Department of Agriculture had its own booth selling plants and seedlings.



Lovely Nikki Benitez, wife of Mayor Albee Benitez of Bacolod City.

After walking around and buying this and that, I needed to sit down and take a break. Of course, the fair's organizers anticipated that visitors would need to rest, so there was a section of the hall with tables and chairs where one could sit and enjoy the foods and beverages available. I was tempted to buy the Ilocos empanada, but was already full from all the free food samples I had been offered! It was clear that the

fair was carefully planned and thoughtfully prepared for, as there were even shopping carts available to make bulk purchasing more convenient!

After visiting more booths after my brief break, I couldn't help but feel a sense of pride for the resolute spirit of Filipino entrepreneurs, who have endured and thrived in the face of numerous challenges. And how wonderful it is that the government has acknowledged their invaluable contribution to our nation's economy and created programs and events like the Trade Fair to help them and shine the spotlight on them.

(The 10th DTI-Bagong Pilipinas National Food Fair ran from July 3 to 7 2024, at the Megatrade Hall of Megamall.)

<https://www.philstar.com/entertainment/2024/07/08/2368447/putting-spotlight-pinoy-entrepreneurs>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Chocoholics bite bitter truth as cocoa prices soar (First of 2 Parts)

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

July 8, 2024 | 12:00am



A worker harvests cacao in a farm.

STAR / File

Special Report

MANILA, Philippines — Bakers like Carolyn are facing a bitter truth: cocoa prices are rising.

It has been weeks since she last went to her regular bakery goods supplier.

What she thought to be a typical supply run to stock up on her ingredients turned out to be one of the biggest surprises in her young life as a home-based baker.

As she held up a pack of cocoa tablets, confusion began.

Parang hindi ito ang price dati? She told herself.

“Tapos ayun nga, nagtaas nga,” Carolyn Co, owner of online bakeshop Salted Caramel Manila, told The STAR.

Carolyn noted that the price of the local cocoa brand she uses has gone up by P15 to P20 per kilogram. Meanwhile, the two-and-a-half kilogram of imported cocoa she uses has increased by P500. This is just in the past six months.

She started her home bakery late last year. Since then, she has not raised the prices of her revel bars and chocolate cookies.

But the likes of Carolyn are few and far between today.

Cocoa rising

Some of the home bakers, especially those selling online, have been forced to be creative in coping with the cocoa price situation to ensure their businesses' survival.

Most have already increased prices outright between P20 and P50 per offering. Others have reworked their bundles and packages, either offering fewer chocolate-based products or replacing them with other items to keep prices the same.

But it is not only bakers that are reeling from high cocoa prices.

Small-time beverage vendors were not spared. Wholesale prices of soluble chocolate drinks, often popular to students, have risen by as much as P100 per pack.

Even multinational and corporate industry players have adjusted too. Chocolate bar prices in the market have increased by P2 or P3, depending on the brand and weight.

And the story is the same for artisanal chocolatiers. Prices are up by P10 to P100 depending on the product. Chocolate bars are up by P10 to P20 while tablea increased by P50 per kilogram.

Cocoa powder is another story: some have risen by P100 per pack, worse, others have doubled or even more than doubled in prices to as much as P800 per kilogram.

Cacao situation

The Philippines produces cacao, but it also imports the product. Last year, local production hit a record level of 10,700 metric tons (MT). Still, it was insufficient to meet the market demand.

The country imported 2,000 MT of cacao beans. Industry observers peg the country's overall demand for the crop beyond those figures, at around 50,000 MT.

Cocoa products are a different matter. Cacao is the unaltered and unprocessed form of cocoa.

The country imports an average of \$220 million worth of cocoa products, including chocolates, in the past five years, based on Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data.

Last year, the country imported \$305 million of cocoa products, about \$135 million of which were chocolates.

Cocoa powder (whether sweetened or not) imports reached \$81 million, making it the country's second biggest imported cocoa-based product.

The country's chocolate confectionery market is estimated to be worth about \$456 million or almost P26.8 billion, according to the United States Department of Agriculture-Foreign Agricultural Service in Manila.

Filipinos' demand for chocolates continues to grow driven by rising disposable income and enduring love for the confectionery. Plus, the health benefits brought about by some cocoa-based products have encouraged demand.

The testament to this has been the growing number of coffee shops and stores offering cocoa-based items as well as the rise of medium and small-scale chocolatiers and pastry shops and bakeries nationwide.

Cacao crash

Global cocoa prices, however, started to escalate in December last year as West African supplies disappeared gradually in the world market.

What happened? Climate crisis happened.

West Africa, which accounts for 70 percent of global cocoa supply, suffered the worst El Niño on record, resulting in erratic rainfall as well as dryer and hotter weather conditions that were conducive to the proliferation of pests and diseases.

All of these happened while West African cocoa farmers, mostly small holders, have been experiencing little to no government support.

In short, production plunged. The region is projected to lose at least 500,000 MT of production in the current season which ends in September, according to the International Cocoa Organization (ICCO).

As a result, the world is scrambling for cacao supplies. The ICCO expects the world to have a supply shortage of at least 439,000 MT at the end of the current season.

Global cacao output is projected to fall by almost 12 percent on an annual basis to 4.461 million MT, according to ICCO.

“As the 2023-24 season progresses, it is certain the season will end in a higher deficit than previously expected,” the ICCO said.

And then April came. World cocoa prices reached the unimaginable. For the first time in history, a metric ton or 1,000 kilograms of cocoa in the world market cost \$10,000, more than 250 percent over the last year and nearly double the record high set 46 years ago, according to Bloomberg.

That is \$10 per kilogram or P550 per kilogram, at least.

In the second quarter, world cocoa prices averaged at \$8.52 per kilogram, almost triple of the \$3.01 per kilogram quotation in the same period last year, according to the World Bank.

Local cacao prices track or reference the world prices. But most of the time local prices are higher than ICO prices. But that changed this year.

(To be continued)

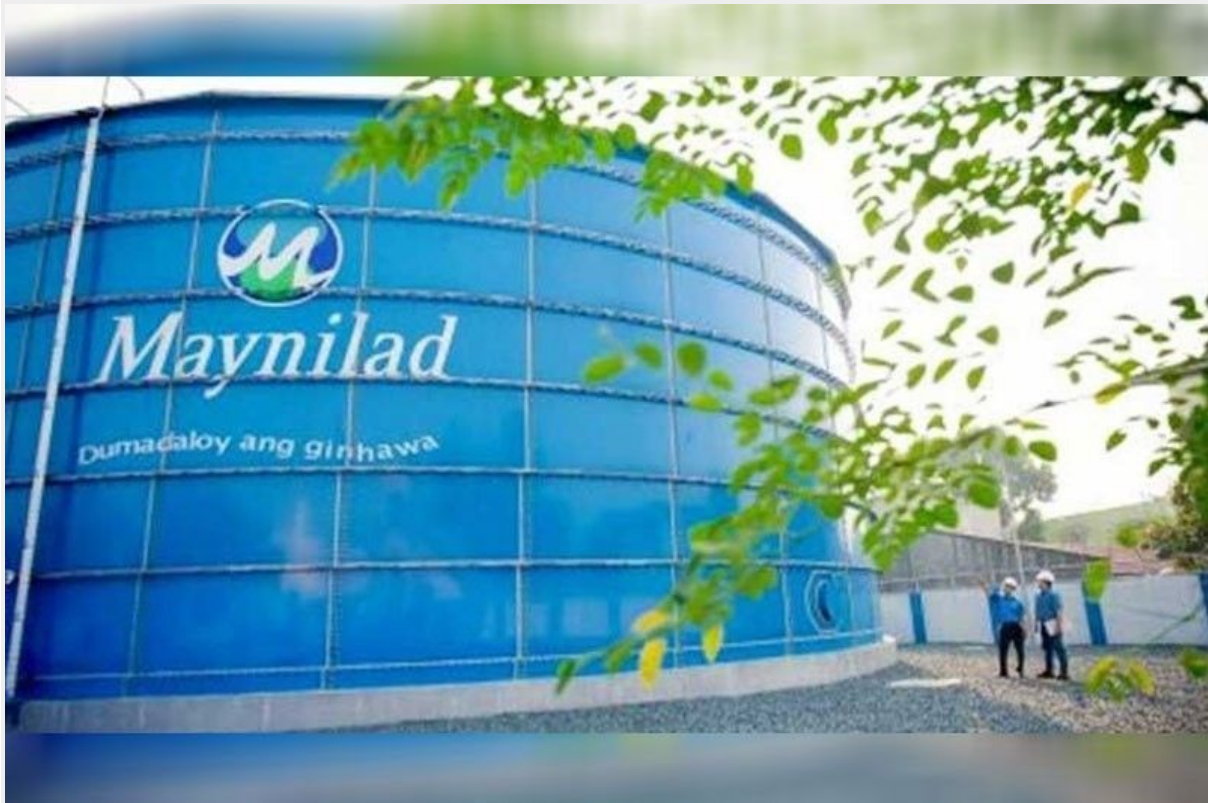
<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/07/08/2368473/chocoholics-bite-bitter-truth-cocoa-prices-soar-first-2-parts>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Maynilad to reforest 450 hectares in Ipo, Kaliwa, La Mesa

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

July 8, 2024 | 12:00am



Maynilad president and CEO Ramoncito Fernandez said the water concessionaire targets to plant at least 220,000 seedlings as part of the company's commitment to a sustainable and resilient water supply for the communities it serves.

Businessworld / File

MANILA, Philippines — Maynilad Water Services Inc. has vowed to reforest 450 hectares of forestlands in the watersheds of Ipo Dam in Bulacan, Kaliwa Dam in Rizal and Quezon and La Mesa Dam in Quezon City as part of its commitment under the Annual Million Trees Challenge (AMTC).

Maynilad president and CEO Ramoncito Fernandez said the water concessionaire targets to plant at least 220,000 seedlings as part of the company's commitment to a sustainable and resilient water supply for the communities it serves.

“We pledge to reforest a total of 450 hectares of forestlands in the Ipo, Kaliwa and La Mesa watersheds, and plant 220,000 seedlings,” Fernandez said.

The AMTC, which is public-private sector initiative, aims to boost ongoing efforts of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to rehabilitate critical watersheds through reforestation and tree-growing activities.

“AMTC has been consistent in meeting its target of one million trees planted annually, ensuring this success has necessitated the establishment of the Million Trees Foundation in 2021,” Million Trees Foundation Inc. (MTFI) president and executive director Melandrew Velasco said.

MTFI has set its sights on attaining the goal of 10 million more trees in 2030.

For her part, MWSS Administrator Leonor Cleofas underscored the need to preserve the natural resources for future generations.

For 2024, 31 partners of AMTC vowed to plant 2.7 million trees, twice the 1.36 million trees pledged in 2023.

The Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Council, an agency attached to the Department of Agriculture, committed to plant at least 500,000 while DENR 4A pledged to plant 400,000 more.

The AMTC has been granting “Champion of Trees” award to partners and stakeholders who have planted 25,000 trees or more for 2023.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/07/08/2368493/maynilad-reforest-450-hectares-ipo-kaliwa-la-mesa>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

'Rice-for-All' program to offer affordable rice soon — DA

[Ian Laqui](#) - Philstar.com

July 7, 2024 | 11:45am



Individuals line up for affordable rice sold at P29 per kilo at the Kadiwa store inside the National Irrigation Administration Office in Quezon City on July 5, 2024.

The STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is set to launch a new program aimed at selling rice at prices lower than the current market rates.

In a forum on Saturday, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Genevieve Guevarra said that the agency's "Rice-for-All" program will be launched in the following weeks to provide affordable rice prices.

"On the works na rin po iyong ating 'Rice-for-All' naman, kung saan mayroon po tayong papalabas din na bigas po na mas mura kaysa doon sa prevailing nating market prices," Guevarra said.

(Our "Rice-for-All" program is underway, and we will soon be offering rice at prices below the current market rates.)

According to Guevarra, rice prices in the program will range from P45 to P48 per kilo.

She added that the DA plans to roll out the "Rice-for-All" program in KADIWA centers first before expanding it to other areas.

"Ito po ay para sa lahat po, hindi po necessarily vulnerable sector. So, kahit sino po puwedeng makabili at wala pong limit although ang sinasabi po natin ngayon ay puwede silang bumili kung mayroon pong 25 kilos na sacks ay puwede po silang bumili ng isang sako," she said.

(This is for everyone, not necessarily the vulnerable sector. So, anyone can buy and there is no limit. Although we are saying that they can purchase one sack if there are 25-kilo sacks available.)

On July 5, the DA rolled out "Program 29" which offered P29 per kilo of rice in 10 KADIWA stores in Metro Manila and Bulacan.

Unlike the "Rice-for-all" program, the "Program 29" can only be availed by eligible beneficiaries like senior citizens, single parents, persons with disability and Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program recipients.

Each beneficiary of "Program 29" is also limited to purchasing 10 kilos of rice monthly.

According to the DA's price monitoring, local well-milled rice had an average price of P51.5, regular milled stood at P49.03 and special rice at P49.03 in the last week of June.

This is significantly higher than the prices offered in the agency's rice programs.

On Friday, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported an increase in food inflation, noting that rice inflation rose to 23%, up from June's 22.5%. — **with reports from Gabrielle Christel Galang.**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/07/07/2368409/rice-all-program-offer-affordable-rice-soon-da>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Speaker pledges House support for food security

By: [Jeannette I. Andrade](#) - Reporter / [@jiandradeINO](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:40 AM July 08, 2024



Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez —file photo/Office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives

MANILA, Philippines — Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez on Sunday assured the House of Representatives’ support to help attain President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s aspiration of rice self-sufficiency for the Philippines, removing the country’s dependence on imports of the staple grain, by 2028.

Romualdez vowed that the chamber would do everything it can to help in achieving Marcos’ agricultural aspiration and end goal, citing efforts by the Department of Agriculture (DA), its attached agencies and other national government offices toward a more efficient and productive agricultural sector.

He noted that a consolidation of efforts by the DA, National Irrigation Administration and other government offices is being undertaken to ensure that funds allocated for the agencies' programs are efficiently and optimally utilized.

The Speaker observed a seeming lack of communication between the agencies previously, which is now being remedied with working together toward the country attaining the aspiration of rice self-sufficiency, where the Philippines would no longer have to import the grain, by 2028.

He said it was an "all-of-government approach," which would involve all the agencies in the Executive branch and Congress to come up with long-term measures to ensure food security for Filipinos.

According to the Speaker, "Food security, is national security ... First we want to bring down the price of rice so it is affordable to all Filipinos because the President does not want any Filipino to suffer or go hungry."

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1958841/speaker-pledges-house-support-for-food-security>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Reforestation drive gets record pledges

By: [Russel Loreto](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:00 AM July 08, 2024



INQUIRER.net stock images

MANILA, Philippines — The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) and the Million Trees Foundation Inc. (MTFI) have received a record number of pledges to plant up to 2.7 million trees in the Annual Million Trees Challenge (AMTC).

At this year's pledging session, MWSS and MTFI recognized San Miguel Corp. chair Ramon Ang as a "Champion of Nature" for his part in reforesting the country's critical watersheds.

"AMTC has been consistent in meeting its target of one million trees planted annually, ensuring this success has necessitated the establishment of the Million Trees Foundation in 2021," said MTFI president and executive director Melandrew Velasco.

Velasco said they also conferred “Nature Heroes” awards to Maynilad Water Services Inc., Manila Water Company Inc. and Grundfos Philippines.

The Australia-based QBE Group Shared Services Inc. was awarded under the “Eco Guardians” category along with Sta. Clara International Corp.

MWSS administrator Leonor Cleofas said the event “highlights our pledge to address the critical need to preserve our natural resources for future generations.”

The collective pledges of 2.7 million trees to be planted was the biggest so far in AMTC’s history. Last year, pledges amounted to 1.36 million trees.

The pledges came from 31 partners with Dr. Cesar Quiambao’s commitment of 700,000 trees topping the list, Velasco said.

The Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Council, an agency attached to the Department of Agriculture, committed to plant at least 500,000 while Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) 4A pledged to plant 400,000 more, he added.

Velasco said AMTC also granted “Champion of Trees” awards to partners and stakeholders who have planted 25,000 trees or more for 2023.

Recipients of the award were: DENR 4A who leads the list with 288,360 trees planted, Maynilad Water Services Inc. (222,280), Laguna Lake Development Authority (148,182), World Wide Fund for Nature PH (125,200), Manila Water Company Inc. (118,000), National Power Corp. (86,750), MWSS (80,000), Luzon Water Development Corp. (60,000), Professional Regulation Commission (43,926), local government of General Nakar (42,284), DENR R3 (37,227), ABS-CBN Foundation Inc. (36,920), MWSS RO (26,000) and DENR NCR.

Recognized with individual awards called “Kampeon ng TubigKanlungan” were General Nakar Mayor Eliseo Ruzol, DENR NCR executive director Jacqueline Caancan, DENR Calabarzon executive director Nilo Tamoria, Maynilad president and

CEO Ramoncito Fernandez, Manila Water president and CEO Jose Emmanuel Victor De Dios and Sta. Clara International Corp. chair and managing director Nicandro Linao.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1958834/reforestation-drive-gets-record-pledges>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Rice EO signals greater PHL openness to trade — BCCP

July 7, 2024 | 8:02 pm



REUTERS

By **Chloe Mari A. Hufana**

EXECUTIVE ORDER (EO) No. 62, which cut rice import tariffs to 15% from 35% signals that the Philippines is opening itself up to more trade, the British Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (BCCP) said.

“When you reduce tariffs... that helps because your signal is that the Philippines is more and more open to trade and investment,” BCCP Executive Director and Trustee Christopher James Nelson told *BusinessWorld* by phone.

“There’s a lot of interest (from foreign investors) and clearly the signal that the President sent by reducing (rice tariffs) is very good,” he added.

Mr. Nelson added that EO 62 benefits the Philippines because cheaper overseas products will be available in Philippine markets, keeping prices lower.

American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, Inc. Agribusiness Chair Christopher A. Ilagan told *BusinessWorld* via Viber that the Philippines is an important partner for American agricultural business. It is the ninth-largest export market for US agricultural goods.

“EO 62 offers more predictability as it ensures a clear and transparent tariff regime over the next few years, unlike the previous practice of annually renewing the tariff rates, keeping on edge those who are reliant on these trade flows,” he added.

Mr. Ilagan added that improved predictability will keep prices and trade volumes steady instead of fluctuating, especially at the end of financial years.

“Better predictability and policy stability are basic characteristics foreign traders and investors rely on for longer-term commitments in the market,” he added.

Mr. Marcos last month issued EO 62 as an inflation-containment measure.

Rice inflation in June eased to 22.5% from 23% in May for a third straight month of declines.

The Philippine Statistics Authority last week said the price of a kilo of well-milled rice fell to P55.96 in June from P56.06 in May.

Regular-milled rice prices increased to P51.07 in June from P51.03 in May, and special rice prices rose to P64.56 in June from P64.41 in May.

“Tariff cuts will evidently lower the price of rice; the assumption is that the gain from the tariff reduction is fully passed on to the consumer. Another assumption is that market prices remain constant,” Action for Economic Reforms coordinator Filomeno S. Sta. Ana III told *BusinessWorld* in a Viber message.

“That said, we cannot simply rely on imports despite tariff cuts. The sustainable, longest-term solution is to increase our agricultural efficiency and farmers’ productivity,” he added.

Mr. Ilagan said that lower tariffs for commodities the Philippines is short on can help in managing affordability.

“EO 62 will help the majority of Filipinos in managing their food-related expenses while also supporting the food industry in general that is reliant on a number of imported ingredients to create value addition through food production and service,” Mr. Ilagan added.

On Thursday, farmer groups asked the Supreme Court for a temporary restraining order to block EO 62, saying they were not consulted on the tariff adjustments as required by law.

Mr. Ilagan said any tariffs that will be raised should still be reinvested in Filipino farmers.

“These funds can be used to support farmers affected by the increased competition from abroad, while also earmarking these revenues to invest in enhancing the competitiveness of the sector, especially those sub-sectors whose produce are heavily reliant on for our own food security, such as rice, corn, and meat products,” he said.

Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto in June said the government will forego up to P22 billion in revenue due to the tariff cut. He described the move as “short-term,” citing the need not to be too reliant on imported rice.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/07/07/606560/rice-eo-signals-greater-phl-openness-to-trade-bccp/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Fuel subsidy for farmers due out this month

July 8, 2024 | 12:04 am



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said that it will provide a fuel subsidy worth P3,000 to farmers that own or rent machinery for crop, livestock, and poultry production.

“This initiative aims to alleviate the financial burden on farmers amid the rising cost of fuel,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said in a statement on Sunday.

The DA said that about 160,000 beneficiaries will receive the fuel subsidy, which will be disbursed starting late July.

“The disbursement of subsidies to beneficiaries is contingent upon the Department of Energy’s certification that the average monthly price of Dubai crude oil per barrel has reached \$80,” it added, citing the benchmark price for fuel traded to east Asia as determined by the Mean of Platts Singapore.

The Department of Energy had said that fuel prices are expected to increase this week with gasoline increasing by P1.50 per liter, by P0.60 for diesel and by P0.80 for kerosene.

Last week, oil companies raised prices by P0.95 per liter for gasoline, P0.65 for diesel, and P0.35 for kerosene.

Farmers listed in the Registry System for Basic Sectors of Agriculture will be eligible for the subsidy.

The DA added that the funds will be distributed via cards provided by the Development Bank of the Philippines and its financial technology partners.

“This project underscores the government’s commitment to providing immediate financial relief to farmers grappling with increased production costs due to elevated fuel prices, thereby supporting their ongoing agricultural activities crucial to sustaining the country’s food supply,” the DA added.

The DA allocated about P510.447 million for the fuel subsidy program in its 2024 budget. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/07/08/606531/fuel-subsidy-for-farmers-due-out-this-month/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Move to impose rice safeguard measures seen negating impact of import tariff cut

July 8, 2024 | 12:03 am



PHILIPPINE STAR/Ryan BALDEMOR
By **Adrian H. Halili**, Reporter

THE use of safeguard measures against rice imports may end up canceling out any price declines resulting from tariff cuts, a government researcher said.

Roehlano M. Briones, a senior research fellow with the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, said safeguards measures against rice imports may “nullify the reduction in rice prices due to the tariff cut.”

“We cannot go on penalizing consumers as heavily as in the past,” Mr. Briones said via Viber.

Section 10 of Republic Act (RA) 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law authorizes the government to impose special duties on rice imports in the event of “sudden or extreme price fluctuations,” triggering a special safeguard duty under the procedures prescribed by RA 8800 or the Safeguard Measures Act.

“With tariffs at 15%, it will depend on what provisions the special safeguard duty will provide to protect farmers which will not run contrary to (the Rice Tariffication Law),” University of Asia and the Pacific Center for Food and Agribusiness Executive Director Senen U. Reyes said via Viber.

Mr. Reyes added that even with previous import tariffs at 35%, farmers have claimed that they are disadvantaged by foreign competition.

Farmers groups last week sought a delay in the execution of Executive Order (EO) No. 62 which lowered the tariffs on rice imports to 15%, until 2028, subject to a review of import duties every four months.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa said that any delays in carrying out EO 62 could hinder the reduction of rice prices, with broader implications for the inflation-containment effort.

“If there is a delay in imports, it will also have an impact on our national rice inventory. And of course, the possible decrease in rice prices will also be delayed,” Mr. De Mesa told reporters last week.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said that it was projecting national rice reserves at 3.64 million metric tons (MMT) by the end of the year, equivalent to about 95 days’ demand.

The national rice inventory rose 10.3% to 2.08 MMT as of May 1, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. has said that the department would back a hike in rice tariffs once rice prices fall to P42 to P45 per kilogram.

Former Agriculture Undersecretary Fermin D. Adriano put forward a variable tariff regime that would save time on determining that dumping — the unfair pricing of exports — is taking place.

“The better alternative is a variable tariff system as adopted and implemented in Bangladesh,” Mr. Adriano said via Viber.

“The problem is to prove there is surge or dumping, which will take time to establish. DA does not have enough technical people to do the math and prove based on solid data that there or dumping or a surge in imports,” he added.

Leonardo A. Lanzona, Jr., an economics professor at the Ateneo de Manila, said that the government should also provide subsidies on a large scale.

“Agriculture cannot be ignored in this case. The government must subsidize a massive agricultural development program, not only raising production but distributing income as well,” Mr. Lanzona said via Messenger chat.

Tariff collections from rice imports support rice farmers through the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund, with an annual allocation of P10 billion. The excess is also used for financial assistance to rice farmers.

The US Department of Agriculture is projecting Philippine imports at 4.6 MMT this year, driven by the cut in tariffs. If realized this would be 27.8% higher than the 3.6 MMT reported in 2023.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/07/08/606530/move-to-impose-rice-safeguard-measures-seen-negating-impact-of-import-tariff-cut/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

US awards Moderna \$176 million to develop vaccine against bird flu

July 8, 2024 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

THE US government has awarded \$176 million to Moderna to advance development of its bird flu vaccine, the company said, as concerns rise over a multi-state outbreak of H5N1 virus in dairy cows and infections of three dairy workers since March.

Funds from the US Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority will be used to complete late-stage development and testing of a pre-pandemic mRNA-based vaccine against H5N1 avian influenza.

US officials said late-stage testing will begin in 2025, pending results expected in the coming weeks of Moderna's phase 1 trial. The late-stage trial will likely focus on safety and immune response. The contract includes options to accelerate the development timeline if needed, based on an increase in human cases, the severity of cases or human-to-human transmission of the virus.

It is too early to tell how many doses Moderna will be able to manufacture, said Robert Johnson, director of the medical countermeasures program at HHS.

In March, US officials reported the first outbreak of the H5N1 virus in dairy cattle, which has since infected more than 130 herds in 12 states. Scientists are concerned that exposure to the virus in poultry and dairy operations could increase the risk that the virus will mutate and gain the ability to spread easily among people, touching off a pandemic.

The risk to the general public from bird flu remains low, and vaccination is not currently recommended for any segment of the population, Dawn O’Connell, assistant secretary for preparedness and response at the US Department of Health and Human Services, said.

However, “robust discussions” are occurring within government agencies about whether vaccinating farm workers would be helpful, said Nirav Shah, principal deputy director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, adding that no final decisions have been made.

The government expects to have more announcements on H5N1 vaccines in the near future, Ms. O’Connell said.

In a previous briefing, Ms. O’Connell said her agency was also negotiating with Pfizer for an mRNA vaccine against H5N1. Both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines use messenger RNA, the technology used in their COVID-19 vaccines.

“mRNA vaccine technology offers advantages in efficacy, speed of development and production, scalability, and reliability in addressing infectious disease outbreaks, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic,” Moderna CEO Stephane Bancel said in a statement.

Manufacturing of conventional flu vaccines using cell or egg-based technology can take four to six months. US officials previously announced they were moving bulk vaccine from CSL Seqirus that closely matches the current virus into finished shots that could provide 4.8 million doses if needed.

Some of those doses could be available as early as this month, Ms. O’Connell said. Those shots could potentially be used to inoculate farm workers and others at risk of exposure to the virus.

Lab experiments from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) continue to confirm that pasteurization inactivates the bird flu virus in dairy products, said Don Prater, director of the agency’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition.

The FDA is conducting ongoing tests of retail dairy products for traces of avian flu and has cautioned against consuming raw milk. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/07/08/606529/us-awards-moderna-176-million-to-develop-vaccine-against-bird-flu/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

World food prices steady in June, UN says

July 8, 2024 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

ROME — The United Nations (UN) world food price index held steady in June, with increases in the indices for vegetable oil, sugar and dairy products balanced out by a fall in the price of cereals.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 120.6 points in June, unchanged from May.

The May reading was revised after initially being given as 120.4.

Prior to June, the FAO index had risen for three consecutive months after hitting a three-year low in February as food prices receded from a record peak set in March 2022, following Russia's invasion of fellow crop export major Ukraine.

The June value was 2.5% down on its level one year ago and 24.8% below its 2022 high point.

In a separate report, FAO raised its forecast for global cereal production in 2024 by 7.9 million tons (+0.3%), putting it at 2.854 billion tons, up fractionally from 2023 levels and marking a new all-time high forecast.
— Reuters

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/07/08/606527/world-food-prices-steady-in-june-un-says/>

MANILA STANDARD

DA okays P514.5-m fuel subsidies for 160k farmers



Agriculture secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel

By Othel V. Campos & Rio N. Araja

July 8, 2024, 1:20 am

Assistance will cover those who own or rent machines

The Department of Agriculture (DA), led by secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. has approved P514.5 million in fuel subsidies for an estimated 160,000 farmers who own or rent machinery used in crop, livestock, and poultry production.

“This is just one of the many initiatives the Marcos administration is undertaking to alleviate the challenges faced by our farmers, who are the backbone of our economy and the key to achieving our food security goals,” said Agriculture secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel.

Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, on the other hand, vowed Sunday that the House of Representatives will do everything it can to help President Marcos Jr. attain his aspiration of rice self-sufficiency for the Philippines by the end of his term in 2028,

He said the end goal of the administration for the agriculture sector, particularly when it comes to assisting rice farmers, is self-sufficiency of the staple grain.

Key agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture and National Irrigation Administration, are now putting in significant efforts to achieve a more efficient and productive agricultural sector, the Speaker stressed.

“We are converging all of this to make the use of funds more efficient. Previously, the DA had a program, the NIA had a program, and they didn’t seem to talk. But we are now talking. So we feel that at the end of this, we will have rice self-sufficiency. That is our aspiration,” he said.

“So this is an all-of-government approach so DA, NIA, the National Food Authority, of course the whole executive, (and) now the legislative, all together,” he added.

Eligible farmers registered in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) utilizing machinery and equipment will receive a one-time fuel subsidy of P3,000.

The subsidies will be distributed through cash cards issued by the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) and its financial technology partners.

Domestic pump prices are expected to increase by as much as P1.50 per liter tomorrow, the fourth consecutive week of oil price hikes, reflecting the movement of prices in the world oil market.

Department of Energy (DOE) director Rodela Romero said that based on the four-day trading in the Mean of Platts Singapore, the benchmark used by oil importers gasoline pump prices are expected to increase by P1.25 to P1.50 per liter, diesel by P0.40 to P0.60 per liter and kerosene by P0.60 to P0.80 per liter.

“Geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, an unexpectedly large withdrawals in the US crude inventories, and optimistic forecasts for summer fuel demand have all contributed to pushing prices in oil products higher,” Romero said.

On July 2, 2024, the oil companies implemented an increase on the prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene by P0.95, P0.65 and P0.35 per liter, respectively.

Year-to-date, total adjustment stand at a net increase of P9.25 per liter, P8.40 per liter and P1.75 per liter, respectively.

Oil prices have been going up for the past three weeks with gasoline going up by a total of P3.20 per liter, diesel by P4.15 per liter and kerosene by P3.30 per liter.

Data from the DOE showed that pump prices in the National Capital Region range from P54 to P86.77 per liter for gasoline, P52 to P81.70 per liter for diesel and P74.04 to P84.04 per liter for kerosene.

The disbursement of the fuel subsidies is contingent upon the Department of Energy's (DOE) certification that the average monthly price of Dubai crude oil, based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS), has reached or exceeded \$80 per barrel.

Given the current market trends, with Dubai crude oil prices consistently above \$80 per barrel, the distribution of subsidies is expected to begin later this month.

The allocation for the program was derived under the 2024 General Appropriations Act. The DA's Bureau of Agricultural and Fisheries Engineering (BAFE) and Regional Field Offices (RFOs) will oversee the implementation of the project.

The fuel subsidy program forms part of the government's commitment to providing immediate financial relief to farmers affected by increased production costs due to high fuel prices.

The DA recognized that fuel support is crucial to ensuring a stable and secure food supply for the nation. **With Alena Mae S. Flores**

<https://manilastandard.net/news/top-stories/314468841/da-okays-p514-5-m-fuel-subsidies-for-160k-farmers.html>

BBM extends cash aid to Sulu farmers

[By Asangan Madale](#)

July 8, 2024

JOLO, Sulu — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. graced the Sulu Provincial Capitol on Friday as he led the distribution of cash assistance amounting to P10,000 each to 10,000 deserving beneficiaries from the agriculture sector and the local family communities.

In his address, Marcos underscored the vital role of the cash assistance, emphasizing its significance as a government subsidy in response to the challenges posed by El Niño.

"Narito kami ngayon upang ihatid sa inyo ang tulong ng pamahalaan, umaagapay sa inyong pagbangon mula sa mga pagsubok na dala ng El Niño, at upang mapakinggan ang inyong mga suliranin (We are here now to deliver to you the assistance of the government, to support you in your recovery from the challenges brought by El Niño, and to listen to your concerns)," the President said in his speech.



BBM VISITS SULU President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. shakes hands with a Sulu resident during the distribution of cash and equipment to Sulu farmers on July 5, 2024, at the Sulu Provincial Gymnasium. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Marcos at the same time lauded the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform for their unwavering support, particularly in providing essential machinery to 17 farmers' associations within the province.

"Kasama din natin ang Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform na maghahandog sa inyo ng karagdagang kagamitan sa pagsasaka (We are also accompanied by the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform, who will provide you with additional farming equipment)," added Marcos.

The President also acknowledged the pivotal role of the local government unit of Sulu, and highlighted their dedicated efforts in enhancing the lives of the Tausug people.

He praised the collective spirit of collaboration and unity that has been instrumental in driving progress and prosperity in the region.

He also cited the indispensable contribution of these hardworking individuals in providing sustenance for the nation, calling them the backbone of the agricultural industry.

Marcos assured that both his office and the local government units would remain accessible and responsive to the needs of the farmers and fisherfolk in the province.

Saddam Abun, one of the beneficiaries, extended his heartfelt thanks to the Office of the President and the Bangsamoro government for the cash assistance and machinery provided to the local farmers and fisherfolk.

"All praise be to Allah, first and foremost, we thank Allah and then those who spearheaded this program where they provided cash assistance and the necessary tools for farming and poultry care," said Abun.

Present during the event were key officials, including Special Assistant to the President Antonio Lagdameo Jr., Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.,

Social Welfare and Development Secretary Rex Gatchalian, Interior and Local Government Secretary Benjamin Abalos Jr., and Presidential Communications Office Secretary Cheloy Garafil.

The Chief Executive's visit to Sulu stands as a beacon of hope and solidarity, symbolizing a new chapter of progress and prosperity for the resilient communities of the BARMM.

https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/07/08/regions/bbm-extends-cash-aid-to-sulu-farmers/1955688#google_vignette

Rice imports up 24% in Jan-June

[By Janine Alexis Miguel](#)

July 8, 2024

THE country's rice imports surged to 2.3 million metric tons (MT) in the first six months of this year, marking a 24-percent increase compared to the previous year, data from the Department of Agriculture (DA) showed.

In its latest report, DA's Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) said that rice shipments for the January-to-June period were higher than the 1.8 million MT recorded in the same period last year.

In June alone, rice deliveries totaled 160,448 MT, lower by 28 percent from 223,211 MT recorded in the same month in 2023.

For its part, the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) said on Friday that importers were delaying rice shipments to the Philippines due to issues with the legality of Executive Order (EO) 62. The group added that imports were actually arriving in record volumes before EO 62 was signed last June 20.

Citing data from the Bureau of Customs, the FFF said that rice shipments to the country between January and May 2024 averaged 431,085 MT per month. However, it dipped to 155,168 MT in June.

Last June, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) slashed tariffs on imported rice to 15 percent from 35 percent to "drive down" the retail prices in the country.

The latest rice import volume for the first six months of the year was covered by 3,182 sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances released by the BPI to accredited importers.

The report also showed that Vietnam remained the country's top source of the staple during the period, shipping 1.71 million MT of rice or 74 percent of the total imports.

Thailand delivered some 349,731 MT of rice, Pakistan followed with 151,318 MT, and some 66,120 MT came from Myanmar.

The remaining volume, meanwhile, came from India, China, Japan, Cambodia, Italy and Spain.

Last year, inbound shipments of the staple totaled 3.6 million MT, down 5.9 percent from the record high of 3.82 million MT logged in 2022. For this year, the DA projects rice imports not exceeding last year's import volume.

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The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), meanwhile, projected the Philippines to remain the world's leading rice importer, with inbound shipments likely to hit 4.7 million MT this year.

However, the DA said that the rice imports were not likely to hit the USDA's projection despite the recorded increase in the latest shipments of the staple.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa earlier said that there was an increase in importation because rice traders and DA agreed to increase importation due to the potential worsening effects of El Niño in the early part of the year.

As the dry weather phenomenon officially ended, de Mesa added that the El Niño's impact was not that severe, resulting in a volume loss of only 100,000 MT in rice production for the first quarter.

Regarding the production target, the department said the

country aims to produce 20.4 million MT of palay (unmilled rice) or the equivalent of 13.7 million MT of rice this year.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/07/08/business/top-business/rice-imports-up-24-in-jan-june/1955702>

Farmers to get P510M in fuel subsidies

[By Janine Alexis Miguel](#)

July 8, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has ordered the distribution of P510.447 million worth of fuel subsidies to farmers amid the rising cost of petroleum products.

A memorandum order signed by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. authorizes the distribution of cash to farmers to financially support them amid increasing fuel costs, the department said on Sunday.

Each farmer in the Registry System for Basic Sectors of Agriculture who owns or rents machinery used in crop, livestock, and poultry production, will receive a fuel subsidy of P3,000.

The subsidies will be distributed through assistance cards issued by the Development Bank of the Philippines and its financial technology partners.

The department said the distribution of subsidies to recipients will depend on the Department of Energy confirming that the average monthly price of Dubai crude oil per barrel has reached \$80, using the Mean of Platts Singapore as the benchmark.

Market data from June 3 to July 1 showed that Dubai crude oil prices fluctuated between \$78.48 and \$86.50, consistently exceeding \$80 per barrel.

"This development indicates that the distribution of the fuel subsidy could commence later in July," the department said.

Tiu Laurel said that the assistance is part of the initiatives by the government to support farmers, who play an important role in ensuring food security.

"This is just one of the several assistance projects that the Marcos administration provides to ease the burden of our farmers, the unsung heroes of our economy and the main pillar of our food security goal," he said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/07/08/business/top-business/farmers-to-get-p510m-in-fuel-subsidies/1955701>

House vows support for rice self-sufficiency

By Ma. Reina Leanne Tolentino

July 8, 2024

SPEAKER Martin Romualdez said the House of Representatives would do all it could to help President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. achieve rice self-sufficiency for the country by the end of his term in 2028.

Romualdez said the end goal of the Marcos administration's work in the agriculture front was rice self-sufficiency.

He said key agencies like the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) were helping make the agricultural sector more efficient and productive.

"So all-of-government approach, the Department of Agriculture, National Irrigation Authority, National Food Authority, the entire executive, legislative have joined forces," Romualdez said in a statement.

Romualdez explained how such an approach would improve rice self-sufficiency.

The Department of Public Works and Highways will link Comprehensive Irrigation Systems with water impounding facilities to create not only reservoirs but also for flood control, he said.

"Food security is national security. So, this program is really important. First, we want to lower the price of rice ... because the President really does not want any Filipino to suffer or be hungry," he said in Filipino and English.

"But, we cannot be thinking about only that, so his long-term plan is that before his term ends, we will no longer be dependent on rice imports... So our farms need to be more efficient, irrigation and more irrigation is needed," Romualdez added.

https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/07/08/news/national/house-vows-support-for-rice-self-sufficiency/1955725#goog_rewarded

Farmers to get P3K fuel support

By Jed Macapagal

July 8, 2024



LAUREL

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has ordered the distribution of P510.447 million worth of fuel subsidies to farmers starting this month.

Each farmer listed in the Registry System for Basic Sectors of Agriculture with agricultural machinery and equipment will receive a fuel subsidy of P3,000, according to DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Laurel said about 160,000 farmers who own or rent machinery used in crop, livestock and poultry production will benefit,

DA said the distribution of these subsidies will be facilitated through assistance cards provided by the Development Bank of the Philippines and its financial technology partners to “alleviate” the financial burden on farmers amid the rising cost of fuel.

“This is just one of the several assistance projects that the Marcos administration provides to ease the burden of our farmers, the unsung heroes of our economy and the main pillar of our food security goal,” Tiu Laurel said.

The agency said the provision of fuel subsidies will also support the ongoing agricultural activities crucial to sustaining the country’s food supply.

The DA said the disbursement of subsidies to beneficiaries is contingent upon the Department of Energy's (DOE) certification that the average monthly price of Dubai crude oil per barrel has reached \$80, based on the Mean of Platts Singapore.

Market data from June 3 to July 1 indicates that Dubai crude oil prices have consistently exceeded \$80 per barrel, fluctuating between \$78.48 and \$86.50.

Data from the DOE as of July 2 showed Manila price per liter of gasoline (RON91) stood at P64.90, diesel at P61.90 and kerosene at P74.39.

Locally, pump prices have increased for three straight weeks from June 18 to July 2 for a total per liter increase of P3.20 on gasoline, P4.15 on diesel and P3.30 on kerosene.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/farmers-to-get-p3k-fuel-support/

Food sales in PH seen growing this year

By [Jed Macapagal](#)

July 8, 2024

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) sees food sales in the Philippines to increase this year, fueled by the rebound of the hospitality and food service industry.

A USDA report dated July 3, 2024 said this is an opportunity for the US to supply agricultural and related exports to the Philippines.

Total American agricultural and related exports to the Philippines reached \$3.6 billion last year.

The report said food and beverage manufacturing will see a 5-percent growth in sales this year despite increasing input costs, especially raw materials due to still-elevated food inflation rates.

The USDA said increased production costs will lead to more manufacturers increasing product prices.

Raw material products from the US are soybean meal and soy products; wheat products, powdered milk, buttermilk, pork offal, liver, guts, bladders and stomach; chipping potatoes, starches, tomato sauce, food preparations, dried grapes, unsweetened peaches, dextrins, peptones, proteins, tree nuts and pulses.

The USDA said food retail can grow by 7 percent this year as consumers travel more often and spend less time cooking at home.

Other factors that will contribute to higher sales are the continued expansion of retail chain stores in key cities and provincial areas, continued food inflation rates and agricultural damage caused by El Niño to prices of rice, corn and vegetables.

The report said with the sustained growth of supermarkets, hypermarkets, convenience stores and warehouse clubs in the country, the US can provide more

ultra-high temperature and chocolate milk, butter, cheddar, mozzarella, cream cheese, ice cream, soy milk, chicken leg quarters and breasts, tomato sauces, sausages, hotdogs, luncheon meat, meatloaf, pasta, seasoning, tomato ketchup, raisins, nuts, peas, beans, kidney beans, garlic, onions, potatoes, mushroom, chocolate, candies, cereals, bakery goods, frozen fruits and vegetables, beverages and pet food.

The USDA report said food service sales will surpass pre-pandemic levels, growing 10 percent this year.

It added this is because popular restaurants and hotels have reached full capacity while demand for catering on meetings, conferences and exhibitions has been increasing.

The USDA said limited-service restaurants, mostly serving fried chicken and pizza, have a high proportion of food service outlets which would open opportunities for the export of American chicken leg quarters, mozzarella and other imported ingredients.

The report said because of increased mobility, street kiosks are also growing that needs raw materials such as potato fries, processed meat, fruit beverages as well as roasted coffee and bean extracts.

It added more consumers also frequent bars and fine dining restaurants, driving up consumption of distilled spirits and wines.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/food-sales-in-ph-seen-growing-this-year/

Inflation downtrend to continue: NEDA

By Angela Celis

July 8, 2024



Overall inflation eases. Food inflation rose at 6.5 percent in June from 6.1 percent the previous month, mainly driven by higher prices of vegetables and meat. (PNA Photo)

Overall inflation is expected to continue its downtrend in the coming months following the easing of inflation rate in June, according to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

The previous “extreme” conditions, such as the El Niño phenomenon, which impacted inflation are unlikely to be experienced for the rest of the year, NEDA Secretary Arsenio Balisacan told reporters last Friday.

“I cannot say the worst is over, but I think that the extreme situations are not likely anymore,” Balisacan said.

“Overall inflation, yes, I would expect (the downtrend to continue in the coming months. The performance of) non-food was quite favorable, (its) price movements in the last month. Hopefully, we can manage that, (that there are no) unforeseen price increases coming from the utilities,” he added.

The NEDA chief also expressed optimism for food inflation, even as it remains elevated.

“I think we expect in the coming months (for food inflation) to come down, because the El Niño is over. (I’m) hoping that the La Niña will not bring severe flooding and all that. And I think that prices will start to moderate, so I think it will enable us to still achieve the inflation target of two to four percent,” Balisacan said.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported last Friday that the country's inflation rate eased to 3.7 percent in June 2024, down from 3.9 percent the previous month.

A significant factor contributing to this slowdown is the sharper deflation in electricity, which led to a reduction in the inflation rate of housing and utilities.

In addition, transport inflation decelerated primarily due to lower inflation rates in personal transport and gasoline.

On the other hand, food inflation rose at 6.5 percent in June from 6.1 percent in the previous month, mainly driven by higher prices of vegetables and meat.

While rice inflation slightly declined, it remained high at 22.5 percent in June from 23 percent in May.

Meanwhile, Balisacan was also asked to comment on reports that the country is the most coal-dependent in Southeast Asia, based on data released by energy think tank Ember which showed that the Philippines' dependence on coal-fire power rose by 62 percent in 2023, surpassing Indonesia and China.

Balisacan said there is a chance that moving forward, the prices of renewables will decline, making it more affordable.

"But in the meantime, we have to buy time, and buy time meaning we can't force our country to transition quickly to a fully renewable or dominantly renewable. We have to be realistic, we have to work on policies that quite reflect the conditions of our local economy. So we can't just adopt those mentioned (and implemented) by very rich countries, because we're not in the same situation, we're not as rich as they are," Balisacan said.

"We don't have the technology, we don't have the finances. So what we are saying when we committed to this is we're going to achieve this, on the condition that we have access to technology, we have access to finances, but those... are so slow in coming. Many, not just us, developing countries that have those issues," he added.

Balisacan said the country's ability to meet its obligations are also contingent on the commitments of other development partners, including developed countries.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/inflation-downtrend-to-continue-neda/

Affordable rice to reach the needy— Romualdez

Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz

July 8, 2024

THE House of Representatives on Sunday assured that affordable rice will reach those in need as the national government launched the P29 Rice Program, with the goal of reaching rice self-sufficiency by 2028.

Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez said that the government would gather vital data during the trial to ensure a smooth nationwide rollout, with the ultimate goal of achieving rice self-sufficiency by 2028.

Romualdez said the end goal of everything that the Marcos administration has been doing on the agriculture front, particularly when it comes to assisting rice farmers, is self-sufficiency when it comes to the staple grain.

He said that key agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Irrigation Administration (NIA), are now putting in significant efforts to achieve a more efficient and productive agricultural sector.

Launching its large-scale trial last Friday, the P29 Rice Program will operate in 10 locations in Metro Manila and Bulacan, offering rice at P29 per kilogram to vulnerable groups, including members of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), senior citizens, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and solo parents.

Beneficiaries can purchase the subsidized rice every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, with a limit of 10 kilos per household each month. Each trial site is expected to support around 60,000 households monthly.

“Offering rice at P29 per kilo to our most vulnerable citizens is a vital step in reducing hunger and improving the quality of life for millions of Filipinos,” said Romualdez.

“Government agencies are uniting to prevent misuse and guarantee that the program effectively reaches its intended recipients,” Romualdez added.

Romualdez emphasized plans to expand the program nationwide. “In the coming months, the government aims to double the number of distribution sites and extend this initiative to the Visayas and Mindanao, ultimately reaching 6.9 million families across the country,” he said.

“Through collaboration with local governments and barangays, the government will ensure fair and efficient distribution,” he added.

On June 24, Romualdez and other House leaders met with the Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement (PRISM), securing assurances that commercial rice prices would drop to as low as P42 per kilo by July, following President Marcos’s executive order reducing rice import tariffs.

Romualdez said the reduction of the tariff on imported rice from 35 percent to 15 percent, as directed by President Marcos, will greatly benefit our consumers and make quality rice more affordable.

For his part, Deputy Speaker David Suarez said this program is essential to helping Filipinos, especially during these challenging times.

According to Suarez, the P29 Rice Program is a game-changer for the agricultural sector.

“This noble initiative not only helps families put food on the table but also supports our local farmers by increasing demand for their produce,” Suarez said.

Also, Assistant Majority Leader Zia Alonto Adiong welcomed the P29 Rice Program as “a proactive step toward ensuring food security for our most vulnerable citizens.”

“With rising global food prices, many families are struggling to make ends meet. The P29 Rice Program provides a much-needed relief by making a staple food more affordable. It is an essential measure to help ensure that no Filipino goes hungry, particularly those who are most in need,” Adiong said.

Assistant Majority Leader Francisco Paolo Ortega V noted the program’s broader impact on the economy and society.

“The P29 Rice Program reflects the administration’s commitment to tackling inflation and providing immediate relief to those in need,” he said.

Assistant Majority Leader Jay Khonghun said the P29 Rice Program not only helps families but also supports local farmers, ensuring they have a stable market for their produce.

According to Rep. Rodge Gutierrez, the nominee to the House of the 1-Rider party-list group, the program addresses immediate food needs and plays a crucial role in stabilizing the economy.

Deputy Majority Leader Faustino Dy V said the P29 Rice Program is a key strategy for reducing the volatility of rice prices and providing a reliable supply to the citizenry.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/08/affordable-rice-to-reach-the-needy-romualdez/>

DA okays release of fuel subsidies worth ₱510M

Ada Pelonia

July 8, 2024

AGRICULTURE Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. issued a memorandum order approving the distribution of P510.447 million worth of fuel subsidies to farmers.

Laurel said the fuel subsidies would be distributed to about 160,000 farmers who own or rent machinery used in crop, livestock and poultry production. He said they expect the subsidies would alleviate the financial burden on farmers amid the rising fuel cost.

According to the Department of Agriculture (DA), farmers who have agricultural machinery and equipment and listed in the “Registry System for Basic Sectors of Agriculture” (RSBSA) will receive a fuel subsidy of P3,000 each.

The distribution of these subsidies will be facilitated through assistance cards provided by the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) and its financial technology partners, read a statement issued by the DA.

The statement added that the subsidies would come from government’s allocation as cited in the 2024 General Appropriations Act (GAA). According to the statement, the project would be implemented through the engineering and regional field offices under the Bureau of Agricultural and Fisheries, an agency attached to the agriculture department.

Laurel underscored the significance of this assistance project, emphasizing that it forms part of several initiatives by the administration to support farmers, “who are integral to ensuring food security and are considered the backbone of the economy.”

“This is just one of the several assistance projects that the Marcos administration provides to ease the burden of our farmers, the unsung heroes of our economy and the main pillar of our food security goal,” the DA chief was quoted in the statement as saying.

According to the DA said the disbursement of subsidies to beneficiaries is contingent upon certification by the Department of Energy that the average monthly price of Dubai crude oil per barrel has reached \$80, based on the Mean of Platts Singapore.

According to the DA, market data from June 3 to July 1 indicates that Dubai crude oil prices have consistently exceeded \$80 per barrel, fluctuating between \$78.48 and \$86.50.

“This development indicates that the distribution of the fuel subsidy could commence later in July,” it added.

The DA said project underscores the government’s commitment to providing immediate financial relief to farmers grappling with increased production costs due to elevated fuel prices, thus supporting their ongoing agricultural activities crucial to sustaining the country’s food supply.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/08/da-okays-release-of-fuel-subsidies-worth-%e2%82%b1510m/>

FDA OK of anti-ASF vaccine expected in two weeks

Ada Pelonia

July 8, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said the commercial trial for the African swine fever (ASF) vaccine would be approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) two weeks from now.

“Malapit nang lumabas ang approval sa vaccine for the swine,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said at the sidelines of Presidential Assistance for Farmers, Fisherfolk and Families (PAFFF) event in Calabayog City, Eastern Samar last week.

“FDA and the DA are working very closely on this. Ang ganda ng teamwork namin,” Laurel added.

He said the approval would be followed by commercial distribution of the vaccines, noting that the vaccine from Vietnam is effective.

The availability of the vaccines will stop the spread of ASF in the country, the DA said.

Laurel also said the department plans to concentrate on checking imported goods entering the country.

Meanwhile, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations highlighted the need for an integrated and holistic approach to addressing ASF through innovative strategies like risk communication and community engagement (RCCE).

In an opinion piece, FAO Representative in the Philippines Lionel Dabbadie and Agriculture Assistant Secretary Constante Palabrica said “the emphasis on RCCE underscores how human behavior is key to controlling ASF spread.”

They added that disease transmission among domestic and wild pigs is significantly influenced by human activities such as farm visits, animal movements, and trade, which effective RCCE strategies can help bridge.

“We must invest and strengthen evidence-based ASF management and RCCE policies. This involves developing robust communication frameworks that are informed by best practices and tailored to meet specific local needs,” they said in a piece sent to the media.

They also said that fostering global and regional cooperation is crucial for improving disease surveillance and management strategies.

“Empowering communities must be at the core of these efforts. By providing them with the necessary resources, knowledge, and support, we enable them to implement effective biosecurity measures, that lead to sustainable control and prevention of ASF.”

ASF is a contagious swine disease with a 100 percent fatality rate which affects domestic pigs and wild boar. It has been reported in several parts of the world. The Philippines first confirmed the ASF outbreak in 2019.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/08/fda-ok-of-anti-asf-vaccine-expected-in-two-weeks/>

DTI tells exporters: Comply with SoKor food safety rules

Andrea E. San Juan

July 8, 2024

THE Department of Trade and Industry Export Marketing Bureau (DTI-EMB) is strongly advising Philippine exporters to comply with South Korea's food safety regulations to ensure continued acceptance of their products in the said country.

In an advisory posted on the DTI-EMB's website, the export marketing arm of DTI said the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS) of South Korea issued Notice 2024-26, amending the Regulations on Declaration and Inspection of Imported Food which took effect on 14 June 2024.

According to DTI-EMB, the amendment aims to streamline the import application process while strengthening oversight and risk management measures.

Further, it expands the scope to include raw materials (excluding aquatic products) declared by registered food production, processing enterprises, and food additive manufacturers.

Among the key highlights of the updated regulation is the "intensified" inspections on Chinese imports.

Under this update in the measure, DTI-EMB said, "The regulation introduces more 'rigorous' inspections, including precise checks and random sampling, for specific food items imported from China, such as soybeans, millet, red beans, persimmons, burdock, and pumpkins."

The regulation of South Korea on its food imports also noted that it has increased the number of pesticide residue testing items for the initial precise inspection from 113 to 128.

“This will help to comprehensively detect and monitor the pesticide residues in imported foods, ensuring food safety,” the regulation noted.

Another highlight in the updated regulation of South Korea’s ministry of food and drug safety is the alignment with expiration date labeling.

“The wording in the standards has been revised to align with the implementation of the expiration date labeling system,” the regulation noted.

South Korea also expanded the scope of “planned import applications.” The regulation expands the application eligibility for planned imports of raw materials used in the production of a company’s own products.

This includes registered food manufacturers, food additive producers, and professional distributors. This requires applicants to submit test reports from MFDS-recognized foreign laboratories.

“The Export Marketing Bureau strongly advises Philippine exporters to comply with food safety regulations to ensure the continued acceptance of their products in South Korea and other export markets,” the DTI’s export marketing arm noted.

Based on international trade data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Philippine exports to South Korea have reached \$3.53 billion in 2023, which makes South Korea the Philippines’ 5th top exporting country in the said year.

The Philippines’ top export products to South Korea are electronics, fresh bananas, ignition wiring sets, electronic equipment and parts, cathodes and sections of cathodes of refined copper, pineapple and pineapple products, and copper concentrates, among others.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/08/dti-tells-exporters-comply-with-sokor-food-safety-rules/>

FMJr says govt committed to provide land, support services to farmers

Jonathan L. Mayuga

July 8, 2024



President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Marcos made the assurance as he led the turnover of support services worth P2.6 million to seven agrarian reform cooperatives through the DAR on July 5 at the Mindanao Civic Center in Tubod, Lanao del Norte.

The initiative is part of the Climate-resilient Farm Productivity and Support Program (CRFPSP), which aims to enhance and sustain the agricultural productivity of agrarian reform communities as a measure of climate change resiliency.

The program is designed to build resiliency and enhance agricultural productivity, mechanize farm production systems, and serve as revenue-generating assets for the cooperatives.

“The job of the Department of Agrarian Reform is not just to give land. After giving you land titles to your land, you will continuously receive support that you need in farming,” Marcos told the farmer-beneficiaries in his brief speech.

The agrarian cooperatives and the support they received:

- Maliwanag-Maigo Agrarian Reform Community Marketing Cooperative: one mobile corn sheller,
- El Salvador Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative: one mobile rice mill
- Bualan ARB Marketing Cooperative: Banana slicing chopping machine
- Buriasan Gmal Pili Dansalan Marketing Cooperative: one mini hauling truck
- Darulamal Organic ARC Farmers Agriculture Cooperative: one rice mill
- Tagoloan ARB Organization: one mini-hauling vehicle
- Ramin II Farmers Agriculture Cooperative: one farm tractor

Nelyn Yane, chairman of the Bualan ARB Marketing Cooperative, expressed her gratitude to the President and Agrarian Reform Secretary Conrado Estrella III for providing them with a banana-slicing machine. She noted that it would be used to produce banana chips, a snack food processed by the women members of the cooperative.

“With this machine, we will now earn more because we can now produce more and meet the market demand,” Yane said.

Estrella, who accompanied Marcos during the turn-over ceremony highlighted the agency’s continuous support for agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs).

“DAR’s work does not end with distributing agricultural lands to the ARBs. We continue to provide support services to develop their lands and their livelihood further,” Estrella said.

Marcos's visit also coincided with the distribution of land titles to 2,857 agrarian reform beneficiaries. This event underscores the administration's dedication to ensuring that farmers have the necessary support and resources for sustained agricultural development and economic growth.

With the global projection of food shortages in the coming years, the national agency has geared up to provide the necessary assistance to farmer-beneficiaries to help them increase their production and counteract the looming crisis.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/08/fmjr-says-govt-committed-to-provide-land-support-services-to-farmers/>

Lower inflation, higher food prices, and the struggle of Filipino families

Atty. Jose Ferdinand M. Rojas II

July 8, 2024

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported on July 5 that the country's inflation rate eased to 3.7 percent in June 2024, down from 3.9 percent the previous month. Though it's a slight decrease, it's enough to wonder whether the ordinary Filipino is feeling this reduction and whether Pinoy families can cope with the costs of basic needs and services.

These inquiries are valid because the government reported, in the same message, that food inflation increased to 6.5 percent in June, up from 6.1 percent in May. Prices of vegetables and meat, in particular, increased. The rains have affected the prices of vegetables, so as we move further into the rainy season, we might feel more increases in the coming months. Regarding chicken and pork, the government reported that the increase could be attributed to the swine fever cases and the temporary import ban on American/Australian poultry products. Prices of LPG also increased slightly at the beginning of the current month.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) reported that the decrease in inflation was partly brought on by a sharp deflation in electricity, which of course led to a reduction in the inflation rate of housing and utilities. Aside from the price of electricity, lower costs of transportation also proved to contribute to the overall inflation decline. This decrease followed the additional rollback in gasoline prices in early June.

The Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) expressed its determination to achieve price stability and meet the country's average inflation rate target range of 2 percent to 4 percent between 2025 and 2028. The DBCC also revealed that measures to reach this target will include the proactive implementation of monetary policy measures and well-targeted government interventions that address the primary drivers of inflation.

That would, of course, include the implementation of the new Comprehensive Tariff Program for 2024-2028 to improve the affordability of essential

commodities amid the rising global prices. The Food Stamp Program is also being done to mitigate the impact of elevated food prices on the poor and vulnerable sector. Again, these are good plans but we need to make sure that the families who are having a hard time putting food on the table will benefit from them.

Looking at these numbers and developments, we see the reality that many Filipino families are having a hard time coping with the prices of our most basic need, food. Wages need to go up and food security has to go up as well in the government's order of priorities. There is a scheduled wage hike in mid-July and we could only hope that this will be substantial enough to help our fellow Filipinos in need.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/08/lower-inflation-higher-food-prices-and-the-struggle-of-filipino-families/>

ABANTE TONITE

P48 per kilong bigas ibebenta sa lahat – Agri exec

July 7, 2024

Inanunsiyo ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na magpapatupad ito ng “Rice-for-All”, isang programa na mag-aalok ng abot-kayang bigas sa lahat ng Pilipino.

Sa isang news forum, sinabi ni Agriculture Assistant Secretary Genevieve Guevarra na sa mga darating na linggo, ibebenta sa “Rice-for-All” program ang bigas na mula P45 hanggang P48 kada kilo.

Wika pa ni Guevarra, ito’y para sa lahat at hindi lamang sa mga mahihirap na sektor.

Dagdag pa niya, kahit sino ay puwedeng bumili nang walang limitasyon.

Nilinaw naman ni Guevarra na hanggang isang sako lamang ng bigas ang maaaring bilihin.

Kasunod ito ng pagsisimula ng P29 Rice Program sa mga Kadiwa store sa Metro Manila at Bulacan noong Biyernes, Hulyo 5. (Issa Santiago)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/07/07/p48-per-kilong-bigas-ibebenta-sa-lahat-agri-exec/>

ABANTE TONITE

Higit P500M fuel subsidy sa mga magsasaka ilalarga

July 7, 2024

Ipapamudmod na ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang mahigit P500 milyong pondo para sa fuel subsidy ng mga magsasaka ngayong buwan ng Hulyo dahil sa patuloy na pagtaas ng presyo ng langis.

Sa pahayag ng DA, tatanggap ng tig-P3,000 ang bawat magsasaka na benepisyaryo ng programang ayuda.

Nasa 160,000 magsasaka umano na nagmamay-ari o nagrerenta ng makinarya sa kanilang pagsasaka, livestock at poultry production ang bibigyan ng cash ayuda.

Ibinibigay ng pamahalaan ang fuel subsidy oras na naglabas ng sertipikasyon ang Department of Energy na ang average monthly price ng Dubai crude ay umabot o lagpas na sa \$80 per barrel batay sa Mean of Platts Singapore (Mops).

Ginagamit na batayan ng Pilipinas at iba pang bansa sa Southeast Asia ang Mops para sa presyuhan ng mga produktong petrolyo.

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/07/07/higit-p500m-fuel-subsidy-sa-mga-magsasaka-ilalarga/>

P45-P48/kilo sa 'Rice-for-All' ilulunsad ng DA

[Joy Cantos](#)

July 8, 2024 | 12:00am



Individuals line up for affordable rice sold at P29 per kilo at the Kadiwa store inside the National Irrigation Administration Office in Quezon City on July 5, 2024.

MANILA, Philippines — Nakatakdang magpatupad ang Department of Agriculture (DA) ng “Rice-for-All”, isang programa na mag-aalok ng abot-kayang bigas sa lahat ng Pilipino.

Sinabi ni Agriculture Assistant Secretary Genevieve Guevarra na sa mga darating na linggo, ibebenta sa “Rice-for-All” program ang bigas na nagkakahalaga ng P45 hanggang P48.

“On the works na rin po iyong ating ‘Rice-for-All’ naman, kung saan mayroon po tayong papalabas din na bigas po na mas mura kaysa doon sa prevailing nating market prices,” ayon kay Guevarra.

Binigyang diin ni Guevarra na ang sinuman ay puwedeng bumili ng abot kayang bigas na walang limitasyon at hindi lamang ito para sa mga vulnerable sector.

“Although let’s say that if there are 25 sacks, they can purchase one sack,” wika niya.

Una rito, pinulong ng Kamara sa pangunguna ni Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez ang mga rice traders upang maibaba ang presyo ng bigas sa Hulyo

kung saan nitong nakalipas na Biyernes ay sinimulan na rin ang P29 Rice Program ng gobyerno sa mga Kadiwa store sa Metro Manila at Bulacan.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/07/08/2368492/p45-p48kilo-sa-rice-all-ilulunsad-ng-da>

REMATE:

Mga magsasakang may makinarya makatatanggap ng P510M fuel subsidies

July 8, 2024 08:05



MANILA, Philippines- Ipinag-utos ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. ang pamamahagi ng mahigit P510 milyong fuel subsidies sa halos 160,000 magsasaka na nagmamay-ari o rumerenta ng makinarya para sa crop, livestock, at poultry production.

Sinabi ng Department of Agriculture (DA) nitong Linggo na naglaan ito ng P510.447 milyon para sa mga magsasakang naka-enroll sa Registry System for Basic Sectors of Agriculture na may agricultural machinery at equipment, kung saan makatatanggap ang mga ito ng fuel subsidy na P3,000.

Ipamimigay ng DA ang subsidiya sa pamamagitan ng assistance cards mula sa Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), sa implementasyong pinangangasiwaan ng Bureau of Agricultural and Fisheries Engineering and Regional Field Offices ng DA.

Subalit, sinabi ng DA na depende ito sa sertipikasyon ng Department of Energy (DOE) na ang average monthly price ng Dubai crude oil per barrel ay umabot sa \$80 base sa Mean of Platts Singapore.

Batay sa market data, inihayag ng DA na bumaba ang presyo sa pagitan ng \$78.48 at \$86.50 per barrel mula Hunyo 3 hanggang Hulyo 1, na “indicates that the distribution of the fuel subsidies could commence later in July.”

“This is just one of the several assistance projects that the Marcos administration provides to ease the burden of our farmers, the unsung heroes of our economy and the main pillar of our food security goal,” ani Tiu Laurel.

Inilahad ng ahensya na alinsunod ang inisyatiba sa isang memorandum order, na hindi pa available ang kopya sa website ng departamento. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/mga-magsasakang-may-makinarya-makatatanggap-ng-p510m-fuel-subsidies/>