

CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY AUGUST 13, 2024

A. MANILA BULLETIN:

BOC seizes agri products without sanitary permits

Rice prices to go down by October, DA chief says

Laurel insists meat from ASF-infected pigs safe to eat

DA chief downplays ASF impact, says pork shortage won't happen

Local industry group wants smuggling classified as economic sabotage

DA, URC extend potato farming program

B. THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Customs intercepts 1,208 kilos of agricultural products from Japan

State of calamity sought in ASF-affected areas

C. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA to implement 'farm-based lockdown' to contain ASF — Laurel

'Department of Importation na lang': House hits DA for importing rice anew

51.8% of target FMR projects completed as of July – DA

Execs debunk oil spill effect on fish, seafood in Bulacan

D. BUSINESS WORLD:

Palay production seen flat in 2024 due to El Niño

Legislators signal readiness to raise agri budget by P88 billion

Senate bills on livestock dev't, enterprise-based learning approved on third reading

Sugar imports to help maintain two-month reserve, SRA says

E. BUSINESS MIRROR:

Ubra: Humidity poses risk to poultry output

SL Agritech aims to uplift lives of more farmers–exec

‘Roadmap to ease Quezon coco sector woes’

F. MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT:

DA seeks P200B budget

G. THE MANILA TIMES:

SRA assures stable sugar prices with new imports

DA says P200.2B budget not enough

180 kgs of illegally caught fish confiscated in Bacolod market

H. MANILA STANDARD:

Potato eyed as sustainable food

I. ABANTE TONITE:

ASF infected na pork puwede pa kainin – Agri chief

J. REMATE:

Nat’l state of calamity sa ASF ‘di kailangan – DA chief

K. ABANTE:

NIA hugas-kamay na inagaw papel ng agri

MANILA BULLETIN:

BOC seizes agri products without sanitary permits

BY [XANDER DAVE CEBALLOS](#)

Aug 12, 2024 06:12 PM

Several agricultural commodities were seized by the Bureau of Customs-Ninoy Aquino International Airport as they did not have sanitary permits.

During a joint inspection, BOC-NAIA and Department of Agriculture officers seized shipments from two Japanese passengers containing agricultural products after failing to present the required Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance (SPSIC).

A shipment brought in by a Japanese national was intercepted on Aug. 8, which included 527.10 kilograms of fresh beef, 26.5 kilograms of fresh chicken, 60 pieces of eggs, 57.1 kilograms of various fruits and vegetables, and 57.10 kilograms of fishery products.

Another shipment was seized the next day, Aug. 9, consisting of 140.2 kilograms of meat and meat products, 10 pieces of eggs, 165 kilograms of fruits, plants, and vegetables, and 235.5 kilograms of assorted fishery products.

The BOC said that the SPSIC should be secured from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

All seized products have been turned over to the BAI, BPI, and BFAR, the relevant authorities under DA, for proper disposal to ensure that no potential health risks or harm to the food industry arise from their unauthorized entry.

“These operations are the direct result of the enhanced partnership between the Bureau and the DA, ensuring that our borders remain protected from the entry of unauthorized goods which may pose health hazards not only to the consuming public but also our local industries,” BOC Commissioner Bienvenido Y. Rubio said.

District Collector Yasmin O. Mapa, likewise warned fresh beef and meat importers to secure the necessary permits and assured them that they “will continue to bolster the BOC’s border protection efforts against smuggling and other illicit activities.”

https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/12/article-2622bocseizesagriproductswithoutsanitarypermits#google_vignette

MANILA BULLETIN:

Rice prices to go down by October, DA chief says

BY **DEXTER BARRO II**

Aug 12, 2024 05:11 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. is expecting the retail prices of rice to significantly go down by October as the reduction on the tariff rate of the staple food takes full effect.



(MANILA BULLETIN)

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. is expecting the retail prices of rice to significantly go down by October as the reduction on the tariff rate of the staple food takes full effect.

Through Executive Order (EO) No. 62, the tariffs on imported rice was lowered from 35 percent to 15 percent.

According to Laurel, it is not feasible for rice prices to immediately undergo reduction as the order only took effect last July 8.

“Sobrang maraming stocks na binili ng (A lot of stocks were bought by) importers from January to June of this year at a very high price of 35 percent. So we can really only expect na bababa ang presyo ng bigas dahil marami pang mahal na bigas na naka-stock (that the price of rice will drop because there is still a lot of costly rice stock), by October,” he said during the budget deliberations on Monday, Aug. 12.

With this in mind, the DA chief said the public should anticipate prices to “average down”.

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He noted that the lower prices would only come to fruition once the remaining stock of imported rice—which was bought at a high price—will be finally depleted.

“Doon maramdaman, do’n natin mararamdaman ‘yan (It can be felt there, we will feel it there),” Laurel stressed.

As of Aug. 8, the price of regular milled rice ranges from P46 to P48. Meanwhile, well-milled rice is between P51 to P53.

These prices are a far cry to previous averages, which neared or even passed the P60-mark.

“Bumaba na ho ng kaunti (It went down a little), Mr. Chair,” added Laurel.

Earlier, Malacañang said the prices of rice will drop by P6 to P7 “in the coming months” following the lowered rice tariff.

The Department of Finance (DOF), on the other hand, is forecasting at least a P5 decrease in the average price of the commodity.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/12/rice-prices-to-go-down-by-october-da-chief-says>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Laurel insists meat from ASF-infected pigs safe to eat

BY **ELLSON QUISMORIO**

Aug 12, 2024 04:54 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has reiterated that it's safe to cook and consume pork from hogs that died due to African Swine Fever (ASF).
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(Unsplash)

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has reiterated that it's safe to cook and consume pork from hogs that died due to African Swine Fever (ASF) .

"We have learned from 2019 ito 'yong masyadong strikto (this was a very strict phase), we have come to understand ASF as a disease," Tiu told reporters in a chance interview Monday, Aug. 12 on the sidelines of the agency's 2025 budget hearing,

"Pwede naman 'yan lutuin. Ibang bansa nga meron silang processing plants for infected animals para lutuin at ilata kasi safe naman eh," said the Cabinet official.

(You can cook that. In other countries there are even processing plants for infected animals for the purpose of cooking and canning since it's safe.)

Laurel gave this reassurance amid the outbreak of ASF in at least eight municipalities in Batangas. He says the disease is pretty much contained within farms and has not affected the entirety of these municipalities.

The Philippine government is set to launch an aggressive inoculation campaign against the dreaded ASF, which practically has a 100 percent mortality rate in hogs.

The existing practice involves the mass culling all pigs from an ASF-infected farm, even if just a few animals are infected. The carcasses are then buried.

"For nationwide, to be ready we need 600,000 [ASF vaccines]. So we're procuring emergency 10,000 kasi municipalities lang ito eh (because this is only for municipalitie).

"But may kasunod na procurement for 60,000 kasi kailangan may buffer stock tayo na naka-ready na i-implement sa labas sa mga red zones," Laurel explained.

(But we will subsequently procure an additional 60,000 because we need a buffer stock ready for implementation outside the red zones.)

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/12/laurel-insists-meat-from-asf-infected-pigs-safe-to-eat>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA chief downplays ASF impact, says pork shortage won't happen

BY [ELLSON QUISMORIO](#)

Aug 12, 2024 04:09 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. downplayed on Monday, Aug. 12 the effects of the African Swine Fever (ASF) outbreak in eight municipalities in Batangas.



DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. (Noel Pabalate/ MANILA BULLETIN)

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. downplayed on Monday, Aug. 12 the effects of the African Swine Fever (ASF) outbreak in eight municipalities in Batangas.

Speaking to reporters in a chance interview on the sidelines of the agency's 2025 budget hearing, Laurel said that the ASF was only confined to farms within these municipalities.

“It's farm-based ang lockdown ngayon (for now). Hindi naman buong municipality o buong probinsya kaya magkakaroon pa rin ng movement,” he noted.

(The entire municipality or the entire province isn't affected so there will still be movement.)

As such, Laurel doesn't see a pork supply shortage happening as a result of the situation in Batangas.

"Wala naman akong nakikitang perceived shortage kasi ang mangyayari ngayon, yung mga let's say--katulad sa mga munisipyong merong ASF,--hindi naman total na ila-lockdown at walang lalabas," the DA chief said.

(I don't see any perceived shortage because what's happening now is, let's say--like the municipalities affected by ASF--they won't be totally locked down when it comes to product movement.)

At any rate, Laurel says the agency has stepped up its implementation of the Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion (INSPIRE) program, which is meant to help in the hog repopulation efforts.

"Wala akong nakikitang shortage naaman (I don't see any shortage). While there is now ASF, we also have the INSPIRE repopulation program na tuloy-tuloy naman yan eh (which is continuous). Definitely hindi ang shortage dati, hindi mangyayari yan (Definitely, the shortage that we experienced before won't be happening)," he said.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/12/da-chief-downplays-asf-impact-says-pork-shortage-won-t-happen>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Local industry group wants smuggling classified as economic sabotage

BY **MANILA BULLETIN**

Aug 12, 2024 12:00 PM

The Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI) is appealing to the government to declare smuggling an act of economic sabotage, saying that illicit trade harms the local economy and steals billions of pesos in government revenue.



Jesus Arranza, chairman of the Federation of Philippine Industries

Cigarette smuggling alone has drained the country of billions of pesos in tax revenue, fueled crime, harmed consumers' health, and reduced funding for government health programs and support for tobacco farmers, the FPI said in its "Fight Illicit Trade" flyer.

"Agricultural smuggling poses a significant threat to the livelihood of our farmers and fishery folk, and major risk for the consumer's health and safety," Assistant Secretary Carlos C. Carag of the Department of Agriculture Inspectorate and Enforcement Office (DAIE) said during the first National Anti-Illicit Trade Summit held at Manila Hotel on July 25, 2024.

"Smuggled food products bypass quality control and inspection, payment of taxes to BOC, and discouraging local food production. It is an unfair trade practice and should be considered economic sabotage," Carag said.

Charlito Mendoza, Undersecretary for the Department of Finance's Revenue Operations Group, said the Bureau of Customs seized 204 shipments worth more than P41.5 billion in the first half of 2024. The haul included P19 billion in counterfeit goods, more than P13 billion in smuggled general merchandise, and more than P5 billion in cigarettes and tobacco products.

Paul Oliver Pacunayen, acting chief of the Bureau of Customs' Intellectual Property Rights Division, said the agency's top five seized commodities in the first half of 2024 were

cigarettes, illegal drugs, counterfeit goods, agricultural products, and other general merchandise.

The FPI said 20 percent of cigarettes sold in the Philippines are illegal, with tobacco excise tax collections falling by P41 billion in the past two years because of smuggling.

Bienvenido Oplas Jr., president of Bienvenido S. Oplas Jr. Research Consultancy Services and Minimal Government Thinkers, said cigarette smuggling intensified after the tobacco excise tax exceeded P50 per pack.

Citing the Laffer Curve, Oplas said higher tax rates above a certain point can lead to lower tax revenue. Tobacco revenue reached P125.9 billion at a P30 tax rate in 2017 and climbed to P176.5 billion at P50 per pack in 2021.

“Then things literally went south. At a tobacco tax rate of P55 per pack in 2022, tax revenue was P160.3 billion, or a P16.2 billion decline from 2021. At P60 pesos per pack in 2023, it was just P134.9 billion pesos, or a P25.4 billion decline from 2022 and a P41.6 billion decline from 2021,” Oplas said in a newspaper column.

Oplas said the government also fell short of its tobacco tax revenue target by P49.3 billion in 2022 and by P109.2 billion in 2023. He predicted the government would also miss its 2024 target of P152 billion.

The FPI said the Bureau of Customs seized 5,268 cases, or 53 million sticks, of smuggled cigarettes and heat sticks at the Manila International Container Port in May 2024, smuggled from Singapore. The agency also confiscated P4.6 billion worth of “FLAVA” vape products from warehouses in Metro Manila after the Department of Trade and Industry banned the brand in March 2024.

“Smuggling and illicit trade are not just economic crimes. They are social menaces that erode public trust in our institutions and compromise the quality and safety of goods available to consumers and stifle the growth of legitimate business,” FPI president Jesus Montemayor said during the summit.

The FPI also wants smuggling of industrial products to be a nonbailable offense, mirroring a proposal to classify agricultural smuggling as economic sabotage.

“Millions worth of goods have been smuggled into our country, impacting critical industries such as petroleum, steel, resins, wood, agricultural products, and other important industries. When industry and government work together, we can achieve remarkable results. Let us continue to build on this momentum. Let us advocate for stronger policies, support the modernization of our customs systems, and promote transparency and accountability at all levels,” said Montemayor.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/12/local-industry-group-wants-smuggling-classified-as-economic-sabotage>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA, URC extend potato farming program

BY JAMES A. LOYOLA

Aug 12, 2024 11:14 AM

Universal Robina Corporation (URC) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) have agreed to continue a potato farming program that has significantly enhanced overall farm productivity in the Philippines.

“Since its inception, this program has exemplified the power of public-private partnerships in driving positive change,” said Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. in a statement issued by URC.

He added that “this agreement solidifies our shared commitment to improve access to quality planting materials, enhance potato production practices and technologies, increase local sufficiency, and ultimately uplift farmers for a sustainable future.”

URC, one of the country’s largest food and beverage firms, and the DA will continue providing potato farmers in the Cordillera Administrative Region, Northern Mindanao and Davao access to farm inputs, training and market opportunities for five more years.

This falls under the Sustainable Potato Program (SPP) meant to raise the country’s output of a vital staple crop.

Since the program started five years ago, URC has distributed 506 tons of generation 3 Granola potato seeds from Canada to more than 900 farmers in the Cordillera Administrative Region, Davao del Sur, and Bukidnon.

An estimated 23,000 MT of potatoes have been produced from these seeds, generating a minimum gross income of P920 million. The program has benefited 15 farmer organizations and contributed to a four percent increase in national potato production.

“We at URC are committed to contributing to the country’s sustainable development goals. Through the Sustainable Potato Program, we aim to uplift people’s lives and support the growth of the potato farming industry,” said URC President and CEO Irwin Lee.

He noted that “in collaboration with Canada Agriculture and Agri-Food, and the PEI Potato Board, we provide our local farmers with access to relevant trainings and research.”

As part of this initiative, 10 farmers from Cordillera joined a delegation on a potato seeds educational visit to Prince Edward Island last June 9 to 15. The mission was designed to benchmark farming practices, ensure a continued source of Granola seed variety and explore alternative varieties for a sustainable seed source.

Under its Memorandum of Understanding with URC, the DA will provide training on good agricultural practices, seed multiplication, pest and disease management, storage, handling, and marketing.

The DA will also organize a Program Management Unit (PMU) in the three regions to oversee the program's implementation and ensure that targets are met.

The Bureau of Plant Industry will facilitate timely import clearances and conduct pest and disease surveillance.

In addition to providing high quality potato seeds direct to farmers, URC will collaborate with relevant institutions to offer capability-building opportunities and training for farmers.

URC will also leverage its network to establish market access for the potato farmers' produce.

“At URC, we believe in the power of community empowerment and the transformative potential of agriculture,” said Lee.

He added that “our commitment goes beyond business; we are dedicated to changing lives and fostering sustainable growth in every community we touch. Together with our partners, we strive to create a lasting impact, ensuring that our farmers not only thrive but also prosper in evolving agriculture landscape.”

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/12/dept-of-agri-urc-extend-potato-farming-program>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Customs intercepts 1,208 kilos of agricultural products from Japan

[Rudy Santos](#) - The Philippine Star

August 13, 2024 | 12:00am



Among the products seized from a Japanese passenger at NAIA were 140.2 kilos of meat and meat products.

BOC-NAIA photo

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Customs at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (BOC-NAIA) intercepted over 1,208.5 kilos of agricultural products brought by incoming passengers from Japan on Aug. 8 and 9 without necessary import and health permits.

Customs NAIA assistant deputy collector for passenger services Mark Almase, in his report to BOC-NAIA district collector Yasmin Mapa in coordination with the Intelligence and Enforcement Service and Customs X-ray Inspection Project, said the shipment was intercepted at the NAIA Terminal 1 on board Japan Airlines.

The items were brought in by a Japanese national last Thursday, which included 527.10 kilos of fresh beef, 26.5 kilos of fresh chicken, 60 eggs, 57.1 kilos of various fruits and vegetables and 57.10 kilos of fishery products.

On Friday, another shipment from a Japanese passenger was seized, consisting of 140.2 kilos of meat and meat products, 10 eggs, 165 kilos of fruits, plants and vegetables and 235.5 kilos of assorted fishery products.

Almase said the reinforced partnership between the BOC and Department of Agriculture (DA) resulted in the seizure of shipments of agricultural products without the required Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

He said all the seized products were turned over to the BAI, BPI and BFAR, the relevant authorities under DA, for proper disposal, ensuring that no potential health risks or harm to the food industry arise from their unauthorized entry.

BOC Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio emphasized the importance of strengthened collaboration, while Mapa issued a warning to fresh beef and meat importers to secure the necessary permits.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/08/13/2377476/customs-intercepts-1208-kilos-agricultural-products-japan>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

State of calamity sought in ASF-affected areas

[Sheila Crisostomo](#) - The Philippine Star

August 13, 2024 | 12:00am



In a hearing on the P200.2-billion budget for 2025 of the Department of Agriculture (DA), Tiu Laurel told lawmakers that checkpoints have been set up in affected barangays to control the movement of hogs, pork and pork products and prevent the spread of the disease.

Cesar Ramirez

MANILA, Philippines — Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has urged local government units (LGUs) in Batangas affected by African swine fever (ASF) to declare a state of calamity in order to speed up government processes in addressing the problem.

In a hearing on the P200.2-billion budget for 2025 of the Department of Agriculture (DA), Tiu Laurel told lawmakers that checkpoints have been set up in affected barangays to control the movement of hogs, pork and pork products and prevent the spread of the disease.

Tiu Laurel said hog farms in Calatagan, Lian, Lobo, Rosario, San Juan and Tuy as well as in Lipa City have been reeling from the disease.

Of these LGUs, only Calatagan has so far declared a state of calamity.

“We have asked them to declare (a state of calamity) already so we can implement our QRF for indemnification to compensate for the pigs that would be slaughtered,” Tiu Laurel said, referring to the quick response fund.

He said the agency is planning to procure at least 10,000 doses of vaccine to stop the spread of ASF.

He said the outbreaks are limited to farms only, noting the virus has not spread to an entire barangay or municipality.

He said lockdowns are being implemented in hog farms only, and that movement of supplies in affected areas remains normal.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/08/13/2377470/state-calamity-sought-asf-affected-areas>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA to implement ‘farm-based lockdown’ to contain ASF — Laurel

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lalu](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLaluINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 04:10 PM August 12, 2024

MANILA, Philippines — The spread of African Swine Fever (ASF) in Luzon will not dent the country’s pork supply as the Department of Agriculture (DA) will only implement quarantine in farms affected by the disease.

This was the assurance given by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. when he was asked in an ambush interview at the Batasang Pambansa complex on Monday, as the entire Batangas province was placed under a state of calamity due to the spread of ASF.

“We have test kits deployed. Once an animal from a farm tests positive, we would still allow the remaining farms within the local government to move and go to the markets. It’s now a farm-based lockdown, and not the entire municipality or province. That’s why there would still be movement,” Laurel told reporters on the sidelines of deliberations on the DA’s proposed budget for 2025.

“We have learned from 2019 — this was the stricter lockdown — we have come to understand ASF as a disease. It can be cooked. In some countries, there are even processing plants for infected animals so that they can cook it and make it safe. I don’t see any shortage... Then there are vaccines arriving. So if the vaccine works then there will be no shortage,” he added.

Laurel said an initial 10,000 doses of ASF vaccine are expected to arrive by Aug. 23. More vaccines are expected to arrive after the emergency procurement, but it will not be enough for nationwide coverage, which will need around 600,000 doses.

“There’s a 10,000 dose target, priced at around P450 per dose based on what I saw, and these vaccines will be given by the government to the affected areas, especially red zones, for free,” he said.

“For nationwide, to be ready we need 600,000. So we’re procuring an emergency 10,000 [doses] because these are for municipalities only, but there will be a subsequent procurement for 60,000 because we need to have a buffer stock ready for implementation outside the red zones,” he added.

Laurel also said importation of pork products will continue, as the government cannot regulate markets from importing should there be a slight shortage of supply.

“Well, importation continues because pork is not being controlled in any way. So the market forces will dictate if they see a slight shortage. And the importers will just import, we do not have control over them, the law does not allow the DA to control the quantity that they can import,” he explained.

On Aug. 10, the DA announced that livestock checkpoints would be set up in Luzon to ensure that no diseased hogs or other animals will be transferred from one place to another to contain the spread of ASF.

Several Batangas towns like Lobo have a rapid spread of ASF, with at least 16 out of 26 barangays reporting cases.

As of July 31, 8,818 animal deaths were recorded in Lobo alone, resulting in a loss worth P103,338,000.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1971964/da-to-implement-farm-based-lockdown-to-contains-asf-laurel>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

‘Department of Importation na lang’: House hits DA for importing rice anew

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lalu](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLaluINQ](#)

INQUIRER.net / 02:56 PM August 12, 2024



STOCK PHOTO

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) has faced tongue-lashing at the House of Representatives for its alleged reliance on rice importation, as the country is expected to have a four million metric ton (MT) deficit for 2024.

During the House committee on appropriations hearing on Monday regarding DA’s proposed budget for 2025, Agri party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee proposed renaming DA into “Department of Importation” because the agency will rely on importation again to fill in gaps in rice production.

Lee was asking Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. if the target production of 26 million MT of rice for 2025 will be enough, given that when the government targeted 24 million MT for 2024, it fell short and needed to import over two million MT.

“Mr. Chair, Mr. Secretary, two million increase, would it be enough? Because this year, we saw that we were short by almost four million metric tons. So, will it be enough for us to cover the factors that led to the increase in production?” Lee asked.

“Because my premise is, if we know that we fell short before, then what are we doing? Are we designing it for importation that’s why we would not increase our rice production? So, would it be proper if I would say that we are looking at importation as a solution again? So maybe we shouldn’t call it DA, just DI, Department of Importation,” he added.

Laurel clarified that he himself is against importation but the budget is limited, adding that they would just maximize production with what they currently have.

“Mr. Chair, well, definitely, I am against further or increasing importation. That’s why I think I was hired to do this job, but definitely, our budget is not enough [...] But, that is already there, we will just use it wisely to increase production and avoid importation. One thing we really have to invest in besides production is on post-harvest,” the DA chief noted.

When Gabriela party-list Rep. Arlene Brosas asked Laurel about rice production and problems that affected it, Laurel said that weather phenomena — El Niño in the first half of 2024 and La Niña into the second half — coupled with population growth have hampered farming.

“Mr. Chair, because for this year we were hit by El Niño and in the second half, La Niña, we’re hoping for parity versus last year. That is my reasonable view which at least it would be the same as last year, 20-point something (MT) [...] because of what happened with El Niño our production actually decreased, and second half with water now hopefully it would increase we’re hoping it would be the same as 2023, which is 20.1 million metric tons of palay,” Laurel said.

“So it’s a plan, multi-faceted plan, but of course we also have to consider that we will have an ever-growing population eh, we have a moving target, if our population will not increase, I guess we can reduce importation, but with our growing population at 1.0 to 1.2 million more people a year, it’s a very hard thing, it seems DA is always playing catch-up, that’s the reality, Mr. Chair,” he added.

ACT Teachers party-list Rep. France Castro meanwhile said that the weather phenomena and other issues cannot be used as excuses because in the Philippines, these are already constant variables which the DA must prepare for.

“Well you know, that is not something that happens by magic, these are constant variables, El Niño, La Niña, and the increase of our population that we have to address. We should not say that because of El Niño, this happened, what we want to do is to increase production,” Castro said in Filipino.

“These variables are already given when it comes to the Philippines, we have 20 cyclones yearly, we have faced drought. So the DA and the government should have prepared for that, Mr. Chair,” she added.

Last June 2024, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service estimated that the Philippines’ rice imports would reach 4.6 million MT in 2024 — [making the country the biggest rice importer](#) in the world.

USDA said that this 4.6 million MT rice imported for 2024 would be 27 percent higher than the 3.6 million MT imported in 2023.

In his most recent State of the Nation Address, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said that the Philippines was able to produce the biggest amount of rice since 1987, at 20 million MT — touting it as a step towards rice self-sufficiency.

The Chief Executive however noted that these gains and other economic improvements mean nothing if the government cannot lower the prices of goods for the people to enjoy.

<https://business.inquirer.net/474420/da-hit-for-importing-rice-anew-but-laurel-says-population-boom-weather-affects-them>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

51.8% of target FMR projects completed as of July – DA

By: [John Eric Mendoza](#) - Reporter / [@JEMendozaINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 12:04 AM August 13, 2024



Food production in the Cordillera is a high-value industry but also a risky venture because it needs reliable farm roads. —Richard Balonglong

MANILA, Philippines — A total of 51.8 percent of farm to market roads (FMR) have been completed since July of this year, a Department of Agriculture (DA) official said on Monday.

Agriculture Undersecretary for special concerns Jerome Oliveros revealed this during the House committee of appropriations hearing for the proposed budget of the DA.

Oliveros said that of the 131,410 kilometers (km) of FMRs targeted to be finished by the end of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. administration, around 68,122 kilometers have been built as of July 8.

In January this year, Marcos reported that the government has finished 67,328 km of FMRs so far.

This means that there are 794 km FMRs built for around the first seven months of 2024.

However, Oliveros noted that there is still a backlog of 63,288 km of FMRs.

“We are very much aware that there are a lot of regions that would be in need of all these FMRs,” Oliveros told lawmakers. “In fact, it is one of those items in the budget that is in really high demand.”

“That is why we also appeal to Congress that now that we are here in the budget discussion to increase the allocation so that we will be able to accommodate all the requests,” he added.

Oliveros said the DA applied a P26 billion budget for FMRs, but only P23 billion has been approved.

Meanwhile, DA chief Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. suggested that the width of the FMRs should be narrowed down so as to cover more areas.

He noted that the FMRs in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia are not as wide as in the Philippines.

“Their FMR is not as big as ours. Ours is too wide. Sayang ang pera natin (It’s a waste of funds),” Laurel said.

To cover more area, he said that the FMRs should be narrowed down to three meters so the government could cover “50 percent more.”

“Once we achieve that, we could then widen it,” he said in Filipino. “That is the solution I see in order to achieve more in three and a half years.”

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1972152/51-8-of-target-fmr-projects-completed-as-of-july-da>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Execs debunk oil spill effect on fish, seafood in Bulacan

By: [Carmela Reyes-Estropo](#) - Correspondent / [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:35 AM August 13, 2024

CITY OF MALOLOS, BULACAN, Philippines — Fish and other sea products from Bulacan remained safe for consumption as the recent oil spill from MT Terranova, which sank off Bataan on July 25, did not affect the province’s waters, officials assured on Monday.

Julius Victor Degala, head of the Bulacan Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (Benro), said seafood and aquaculture products sold in Bulacan’s coastal towns tested negative for oil contamination based on informal sensory evaluations.

Despite the safety assurance, Degala said there has been a noticeable decline in the demand and consumption of fish and seafood, likely due to public concern following news of the oil spill.

On Aug. 8, around 30 personnel from Benro, the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (PDRRMO), the Provincial Agriculture Office and market masters inspected the fish stalls at the public markets in the towns of Hagonoy, Paombong, Bulakan and Obando and Malolos City.

These agencies are part of the Bulacan Incident Management Team created by Gov. Daniel Fernando to monitor if the oil spill would affect the province.

“Based on the technical team’s findings, there is a general concern among the public about consuming fish and seafood, despite no confirmed reports of the oil spill affecting the province,” Degala noted in an interagency meeting at Hiyas Pavilion in this city on Aug. 9.



SNIFF TEST An inspector from the Oil Spill Incident Management Team of Bulacan conducts a sniff test on seafood sold in a public market in the province on Aug. 8. The visits by the 30-member team in several markets in the province aim to ensure that products sourced from Bulacan waters remain free from oil contamination following the July 25 sinking of MT Terranova off Limay, Bataan. —Photo from Benro

Wilfredo Cruz, Central Luzon director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, also led a sensory evaluation on Aug. 1 and confirmed no traces of oil were found in fish and seafood sold in Bulacan. To demonstrate the safety of Bulacan’s seafood, Cruz and local officials took part in a boodle fight featuring “bangus” on the same day.

Initial projection

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) initially projected the oil spill would move southwards and affect coastal areas along Manila Bay in the provinces of Pampanga, Bulacan and Cavite and Malabon City in the National Capital Region.

Seafood sold in the towns of Hagonoy, Paombong, Bulakan and Obando and Malolos City—areas initially thought to be in the path of the spill—were typically sourced from Malabon, Hagonoy, Malolos City and Pampanga.

As of last week, however, the impact of the spill from Terranova, which was carrying 1.4 million liters of industrial fuel when it sank off Limay town in Bataan, was not as widespread as feared. So far, only Cavite's coastal areas suffered from its impact.

Lt. Commander Michael Encina, the PCG's spokesperson, reported during a National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council emergency meeting on July 29 that the oil leak from Terranova had significantly decreased, with the amount of spilled oil expected to dissipate naturally.

Low price

But the demand for fish in Bulacan continued to decline, forcing vendors to reduce their prices, Degala said.

He said they recommended an information drive to "reassure the public that Bulacan's seafood is free from oil contamination."

PDRRMO chief Manuel Lukban Jr. added some retailers agreed that local suppliers should work to dispel misinformation about the oil spill.

Mar Trillana, a fishpond operator in Hagonoy, reported that daily sales of cultured bangus (milkfish) and tilapia raised in local fishponds and not in Manila Bay saw a 65-percent drop, from 50 tons to just 15 tons.

Fish vendor Jocelyn Lomotan, 61, lamented the "sluggish" sale at her stall at the Malolos City public market for the last three weeks while Norma David, a fish dealer in Malabon, said her regular customers stopped coming to her stall in Sta. Maria town following the news of the oil spill.

But while others have reduced their prices, vendor Eleonor Garcia of Bulakan town said they maintained regular prices of bangus at P150-P180 per kilo and "galunggong" at P200 per kilo because "if prices are lowered, people might think the oil spill is real."

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1972079/execs-debunk-oil-spill-effect-on-fish-seafood-in-bulacan>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Palay production seen flat in 2024 due to El Niño

August 12, 2024 | 9:02 pm



REUTERS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said production in 2024 of palay, or unmilled rice, is estimated to be little changed at 20.1 million metric tons (MMT), due largely to the dry conditions brought on by El Niño.

“Because we were hit by El Niño and then in the second half by La Niña, we are hoping to achieve parity with last year,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said at a budget hearing in the House of Representatives.

The latest estimate represents a downgrade of an earlier DA projection of 20.44 MMT.

In 2023 palay production was 20.06 MMT, equivalent to about 13 MMT of milled rice.

“Our production fell during the first half. Then during the second half we are seeing wetter conditions, *huwag lang sana tayo tamaan ng bagyo* (We are hoping typhoons will not inflict serious damage), We’re hoping that our production will be the nearly the same as in 2023,” Mr. Laurel added.

In the first half, palay production dropped 5.5% to 8.53 MMT, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. This was the lowest level of first half production since the 8.39 MMT posted in 2020.

“I don’t want to over-promise... but it would depend on the gravity (of La Niña),” Mr. Laurel said on the sidelines of the briefing.

The government weather service, known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), declared the end of El Niño in early June.

“I’m expecting one or two strong typhoons... So I have to be more conservative in our estimates,” he added.

PAGASA estimated a 70% likelihood La Niña will set in between August and October, raising the probability of tropical cyclone activity in the coming months.

The rice harvest services about 70% of domestic demand, with imports taking care of the rest.

At the hearing, Mr. Laurel said that the DA estimates rice imports for 2024 of 4 MMT.

The US Department of Agriculture projects Philippine rice imports of 4.7 MMT this year, due to the higher-than-expected volumes during the first half.

“We are trying our best to increase production, not only (via) better seed and technology, but also with the increased number of harvests,” he added.

The government lowered the tariffs on imported rice to 15% from 35%, until 2028 through Executive Order No. 62, in a bid to bring down rice prices.

The DA has said that the lowered tariff on imported rice could bring down rice prices by P6-P7 per kilogram.

“With the 15% tariff... the price of rice should be at P45 per kilo by mid-October, couple with stable world market prices, and foreign exchange rates,” Mr. Laurel said.

He added that the DA is also proposing that the National Food Authority’s buying price for palay during the wet season harvest be set at P23 per kilo dry and P20 per kilo wet. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/08/12/613606/palay-production-seen-flat-in-2024-due-to-el-nino/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Legislators signal readiness to raise agri budget by P88 billion

August 12, 2024 | 9:01 pm



Farmers are seen in a rice field in Bustos, Bulacan, Oct. 17, 2023. — PHILIPPINE STAR/KJ ROSALES

LEGISLATORS said on Monday they are prepared to raise the agriculture budget for 2025 by as much as P88 billion, saying the government should not have reduced funding for the Department of Agriculture (DA) by 6% if it wanted to achieve food security.

The minimum budget increase Congress should consider is P88 billion, Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Raymund F. Villafuerte, Jr. said at a budget hearing of the House appropriations committee.

“Increase the budget for irrigation by P25 billion to fund solar and pipe irrigation infrastructure,” he said. “Add another P8 billion for storage facilities, particularly cold storage.”

He proposed that post-harvest facilities also receive an additional P10 billion to mitigate losses, with another P10 billion going to the Rice Development Program.

Fishports and food terminals should also receive a P4 billion boost each to improve food distribution and processing, he added.

He gave no further details on his proposed spending items.

Party-list Rep. Wilbert T. Lee said that the government's decisions are not consistent with the objective of lowering food prices.

"It's as if we're just kidding ourselves," he said. "We want to increase production and lower food prices, but the DA's budget was slashed; the government has cut the budget for almost everything important," Mr. Lee said.

"I strongly urge my fellow congressmen to increase the budget of the Department of Agriculture to address the challenges of the agriculture sector in support of farmers and fisherfolk and to achieve food security," Party-list Rep. Jose J. Teves, Jr. said at the DA budget briefing.

While proposed budget for the DA itself will reflect a 12.9% increase to P129 billion in 2025, the government has cut funding to agriculture-affiliated agencies and corporations by 28% to P71 billion in 2025, according to the department's budget briefer.

Overall, agriculture's proposed 2025 funding, excluding the Department of Agrarian Reform budget, is P200.2 billion, which would be 6% lower than the approved funding for 2024.

"I don't like the budget we've been allocated; of course, I want more," Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. told legislators.

"What we asked for is P500 billion, and right now it's only at P200 billion. If we can get P300 billion... I think that would be a big help," he told reporters on the sidelines of the hearing.

"It's good that we (are considering to) give additional funding to the Department of Agriculture, but we need to review the performance of all these attached agencies so that we would know how they are performing right now before we add these billions of pesos," Baguio Rep. Mark O. Go said, expressing concern at Mr. Villafuerte's proposal. — **Kenneth Christiane L. Basilio**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/08/12/613603/legislators-signal-readiness-to-raise-agri-budget-by-p88-billion/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Senate bills on livestock dev't, enterprise-based learning approved on third reading

August 12, 2024 | 9:00 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/ ANDY ZAPATA JR.

THE SENATE has approved on third and final reading a bill seeking to develop a modernization plan for the livestock, poultry and dairy industries, and another bill promoting enterprise-based learning.

At the Monday plenary session, senators unanimously approved Senate Bill No. 2558, which calls for a livestock, poultry, and dairy competitiveness fund to be set up with support from import tariffs of P7.8 billion a year for the next 10 years.

“Through Senate Bill No. 2558, we will set a clear and strategic direction for the livestock, poultry and dairy industries, strengthen the organizational structure and institutional capacity of relevant agencies, and ensure that adequate resources are provided to support the growth and competitiveness of the industry,” Senator Cynthia A. Villar, who sponsored the measure, said in a statement.

It also calls for the establishment of the Office of the Undersecretary of the National Livestock, Poultry, Dairy, and other Animals Program to oversee policy geared at boosting production in these industries.

These policies will be focused on benefiting small-scale farmers and organizations engaged in these industries, as duly accredited by the Department of Agriculture.

Legislators also approved Senate Bill No. 2587 or the proposed Enterprise-Based Education and Training Framework Act, which will set up a roadmap for programs promoting industry-driven skills building programs for the workforce.

The measure seeks to bridge the gap between the needs of industry and worker skills.

“While there are many workers who accept jobs that are not commensurate with their qualifications, there are also many workers who lack the required skills,” Senator Emmanuel Joel J. Villanueva, the bill’s author, said in a statement.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. has said his government aims to create at least three million new jobs through upskilling and reskilling programs.

Also on Monday, Senators approved on second reading a bill creating a framework for a blue economy, which will seek to preserve and sustain the Philippines’ ocean-based resources.

The blue economy is an economic model seeking the sustainable utilization of ocean resources through green infrastructure and technology.

Under Senate Bill No. 2450, the government is tasked with drafting a plan to manage marine and coastal resources while coming up with policies to mitigate land and sea-based pollution as well as overfishing. — **John Victor D. Ordoñez**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/08/12/613601/senate-bills-on-livestock-devt-enterprise-based-learning-approved-on-third-reading/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Sugar imports to help maintain two-month reserve, SRA says

August 12, 2024 | 8:53 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

THE Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said refined sugar imports will help maintain a two-month reserve before the start of the next harvest.

“We have ample stocks until the imports arrive. We (seek to) maintain a two-month buffer stock, and we hope our refineries will be up and running in December,” SRA Administrator Pablo Luis S. Azcona said in a statement on Monday.

Sugar Order (SO) No. 5, allowed imports of up to 240,000 metric tons (MT) of refined sugar to increase inventories when mills are closed to ensure stable supply and prices.

On the sidelines of a budget hearing, he said that a two-month inventory was about 320,000 to 350,000 MT.

As of July 21, the refined sugar inventory was 396,339 MT, down 18% from a year earlier, according to the SRA.

He added that the actual volume of imports would be “more or less” 176,000 MT of refined sugar.

SO 5 is open to licensed SRA international sugar traders in good standing who imported under SOs 2 and 3. —
Adrian H. Halili

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/08/12/613624/sugar-imports-to-help-maintain-two-month-reserve-sra-says/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Ubra: Humidity poses risk to poultry output

- Ada Pelonia
- August 12, 2024

The poultry subsector's positive performance in the second quarter may be difficult to repeat in the July-to-September period, according to the United Broiler Raisers Association (Ubra).

Ubra Chairman Elias Jose Inciong said the third quarter is usually a difficult period for local poultry raisers due to several factors, including humidity.

“The third quarter is a difficult period for production,” Ubra Chairman Elias Jose Inciong told the BusinessMirror. “Humidity remains high, and this affects the quality of the feeds, so it's difficult for chickens to grow.”

broilers are smaller than usual, which prolongs the rearing period of chickens, according to a statement released by the Department of Agriculture in 2007.

Figures from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) indicated that the country's farm output contracted by 3.3 percent in the second quarter as El Niño ravaged farmlands.

PSA data indicated that the crops and livestock subsectors recorded declines in terms of value while the poultry and fisheries subsectors buoyed the performance of Philippine agriculture in April to June.

The value of agriculture and fisheries production amounted to P413.91 billion in the reference period at constant 2018 prices. This was lower than last year's P427.69 billion.

The poultry subsector, which amounted to P70.15 billion, posted a growth of 8.7 percent, with every poultry commodity recording increments in their value of production.

“In the third quarter, I’m not so sure if there will be that much of an increase, if at all— hopefully there will be an increase,” Inciong said.

He also said he was “surprised” by the performance of the poultry subsector in the second quarter, considering the dry spell and the woes experienced by raisers in previous months.

“There was a period from October to March or April that the industry recorded heavy losses because of overproduction, which was exacerbated by importation. I expected a reduction as a reaction to the losses and oversupply situation. Apparently, the industry did not lose its momentum,” Inciong said in a mix of English and Filipino.

Meanwhile, Inciong urged the government to fast-track the creation of quarantine inspection areas at the customs border.

This after the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) called for urgent regional efforts to combat the rise in bird flu cases across the Asia-Pacific region.

“That statement of the FAO should prompt the government to accelerate the establishment of quarantine inspection areas at the customs border.”

He added that FAO’s statement would make authorities “more aware of the need for urgency in implementing this long-time need of the entire agri-fishery sector.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/12/ubra-humidity-poses-risk-to-poultry-output/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

SL Agritech aims to uplift lives of more farmers—exec

- [Ada Pelonia](#)
- [August 12, 2024](#)

SL Agritech will continue the legacy of its late founder Henry Lim Bon Liong, who sought to improve the lives of Filipino farmers, according to his daughter and company executive vice president Michelle Lim-Gankee.

Lim was founder and chairman of SL Agritech, the main mover of hybrid rice production in the country. He was also chairman and chief executive officer of Sterling Paper Corp.

“The company’s goal is to uplift the lives of Filipino farmers, and we intend to help more planters,” Lim-Gankee told the BusinessMirror in a phone interview.

She also said her father told her to keep the hybrid rice business going until the country achieves food security and becomes an exporter of ordinary rice.

The government is determined to help cement the legacy of Lim, the industrialist who paved the way for expanded and more meaningful corporate focus on technology to boost agriculture.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the Department of Agriculture (DA) will also continue the legacy of Lim, who died last August 2.

“We can help with their research to improve their strain for better productivity and climate resiliency,” Laurel told the BusinessMirror.

For Agriculture Undersecretary Cheryl Marie Natividad-Caballero, Lim’s passing was “such a loss to the dynamic rice sector.”

“His passion and big contribution to the [Philippine] rice breeding program will live on,” Caballero told the BusinessMirror, noting that most of his contributions have been registered under the National Seed Industry Council.

“The varieties he developed and/or commercialized are protected under the IP regime. This will be recognized and remains part of the government’s procurement for quality seeds—from local or imported sources,” she added.

Caballero also said the Philippine Rice Research Institute is mandated to “help develop high-yielding and cost-reducing technologies so farmers can produce enough rice for all Filipinos.”

“In collaboration with the private sector including Mr. Henry Lim Bon Liong—it has extended a transparent platform for local seed businesses to thrive.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/12/sl-agritech-aims-to-uplift-lives-of-more-farmers-exec/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

‘Roadmap to ease Quezon coco sector woes’

- [Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz](#)
- [August 12, 2024](#)
- 3 minute read



Lucena City—The creation of a coconut industry roadmap for Quezon will enable the province to address supply challenges and increase the income of planters, according to its top local official.

In an interview following the opening of the 2024 Niyogyugan Festival last Friday, Quezon Governor Helen Tan noted that the province is among the top producers of coconut in the Philippines, accounting for 10 percent of total supply nationwide.

However, Tan said the coconut industry of the province is currently grappling with a number of challenges, including the ill effects of El Niño.

She said the weather phenomenon compounded existing problems in the sector and that the roadmap will guide the future of Quezon province’s coconut industry.

“We are lobbying for the creation of a coconut industry roadmap. An international organization has helped us map out the coconut industry in Quezon, and we’ve conducted consultations with major companies to focus on replanting, rehabilitation, and zoning,” said Tan.

“Our local oil millers are struggling with supply, forcing them to outsource because there’s no consistent roadmap. Farmers have diverse interests, so we need proper zoning to understand how much volume we need.”

Tan said there is a need to focus on beefing up planting and rehabilitation efforts and properly designing the industry’s future to ensure sustainable coconut production.

She said the roadmap will determine which areas are suitable for conversion, the number of farms dedicated to coco sugar and coco water production and prevent any sector from sacrificing the overall health of the coconut industry.

The provincial government of Quezon, in collaboration with the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), is conducting a study on the development of coconut industry growth areas in Quezon.

This initiative, which is expected to be completed by June 2025, aims to establish a value chain analysis and an agri-business model to increase productivity and income for local farmers.

Festival

In celebration of the annual Niyogyugan Festival, Tan underscored the importance of promoting local products and supporting farmers.

Tan said showcasing local goods is a key strategy for aiding farmers and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the province.

“You can see that we are showcasing local products here. This is one of our ways to help farmers promote their goods, which are sourced from our agricultural communities and MSMEs,” Tan said.

This year's festival also marks a significant development—the registration of the Niyogyugan Foundation, according to Tan.

In the past, Tan said farmers had expressed their misgivings that they did not fully benefit from the celebration of the festival.

She said the foundation aims to address these concerns by ensuring that coconut farmers, who are integral to the festival's spirit, feel the direct impact of the event.

“Five percent of the sales during the festival will go to the foundation, which is managed by coconut farmers themselves. We also have a scholarship program focused on supporting farmers, fostering a culture of unity and mutual support.”

With the theme “Tara na sa Quezon! Niyogyugan na,” the week-long festival is set to showcase the rich culture, agricultural heritage, and tourism potential of the province.

The website of the provincial government indicated that Quezon has a total agricultural area of 4,167.6421 sq. km representing 47.87 percent of the total provincial land area as of 2023.

“The total area planted with coconuts covers 379,137.60 hectares, making Quezon the province with the largest coconut production area in the Philippines. Also, Quezon is the top coconut producing province in terms of total coconut production in the country with 1,493,066.64 metric tons [MT] in the year 2020.”

Copra making is considered one of the largest income-generating agricultural activities in the province. However, with the volatile price of copra both in the local and international markets, the government has encouraged intercropping and multi-storey cropping to generate additional income for the coconut farmers.

Another major crop of the province is rice, covering a total area of 50,183.35 hectares. Rice production is placed at 194,269.99 MT with an average yield of 3.87 metric tons per hectare in 2021.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/12/roadmap-to-ease-quezon-coco-sector-woes/>

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT:

DA seeks P200B budget

By

Jed Macapagal

-

August 13, 2024



Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. urged the House Committee on Appropriations to approve his agency's proposed P200.2 billion budget for 2025.

Tiu Laurel said in a hearing yesterday the proposed DA budget for next year aims to support a comprehensive investment plan designed to enhance farm productivity, bolster the country's food security and lift millions of farmers and fisherfolk out of poverty.

The amount is 4 percent lower than the P208.58 billion allocated budget to the DA this year.

This year's budget is designed to also fund agricultural modernization, boost productivity, enhance global competitiveness apart from improving resilience against disasters, climate change and pandemics.

"For the past three decades, our agri-fishery sector has faced persistent challenges with low productivity and competitiveness," said Tiu Laurel, at the House hearing.

Tiu Laurel said high production costs and years of underinvestment in critical infrastructure and technology have severely limited the sector's potential which led to rural poverty and concerns about national food and nutrition security.

Tiu Laurel highlighted the urgent need for increased investments to build resilience in agriculture and fisheries amidst climate change, citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority that showed timely interventions, especially in preparation for El Niño, have mitigated damage to crops and supported the poultry and fisheries subsectors in offsetting losses in rice and corn.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions have further exposed vulnerabilities in our food production and distribution systems,” Tiu Laurel said.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/da-seeks-p200b-budget/

THE MANILA TIMES:

SRA assures stable sugar prices with new imports

[By Janine Alexis Miguel](#)

August 13, 2024

THE Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) is assuring consumers of stable sugar prices following the announcement to import approximately 240,000 metric tons (MT) of refined sugar for buffer stocking.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said on Monday that the planned importation would help maintain the current retail price of refined sugar for the benefit of consumers.

Azcona said the importation would also ensure "that our farmers of which 85 percent are land reform beneficiaries have a fair and stable price."

Azcona further said that current sugar stocks were sufficient to last until new imports arrive, and that refineries were expected to be operational by December. Meanwhile, mills are set to begin processing on September 15 and be fully functional by October.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier said that the importation would fill a projected sugar gap and maintain the country's supply until the next milling season in October.

"The intention of this sugar import program is to ensure that despite the projected ill-effects of El Nino for Crop Year 2024-2025, the country will continue to have sufficient actual supply of sugar for domestic consumption and for buffer stock," the order states.

The SRA announced the first sugar import program for crop year 2023-2024 in an order dated Aug. 8, 2024.

The order covered importation of 240,000 MT of refined sugar and is open to qualified participants of Sugar Orders 2 and 3.

Under Sugar Order 2, potential importers are required to first purchase and classify sugar as reserve before being eligible for the import program. A maximum volume of 176,500 MT of refined sugar for eligible importers qualified under the said order.

Participants under Sugar Order 3, meanwhile, can import at least 63,500 MT of refined sugar. Azcona said this would specifically address the shortfall from sugar exports to the United States, a market where domestic prices are lower, potentially leading to losses for exporters.

Data from the SRA showed that as of July 21, the total refined sugar stocks in the country reached 396,339 MT, around 18 percent less than the 483,373 MT inventory reported during the same period last year.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/13/business/top-business/sra-assures-stable-sugar-prices-with-new-imports/1963578>

THE MANILA TIMES:

DA says P200.2B budget not enough

[By Janine Alexis Miguel and Reina C. Tolentino](#)

August 13, 2024

AGRICULTURE Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. urged the House Committee on Appropriations to approve his department's proposed budget of P200.19 billion for 2025, even as he said it would not be enough. During the Appropriation Committee budget hearing on Monday, Laurel cited the persistent challenges plaguing the country's agri-fishery sector and emphasized the urgent need for increased funding for the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"For the past three decades, our agri-fishery sector has faced persistent challenges with low productivity and competitiveness," he said.

He added that high production costs and inadequate infrastructure investments have restricted growth, raising concerns about national food security.

"Our proposed budget for 2025, amounting to P200,195,357, I think is still insufficient, is designed to address these needs," the agriculture chief said. He noted that present challenges justify the need for substantial investments.

The agriculture chief also addressed the impact of global disruptions such as the Covid-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions, which he said exposed weaknesses in the country's food production and distribution systems.

Citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, Laurel emphasized the sector's vulnerability to climate change, particularly the impact of severe typhoons and prolonged dry spells.

The proposed budget for 2025 was lower than this year's P208.58 billion and from the DA's initial proposal of P513.81 billion.

Laurel has said that about P1.2 trillion is needed to irrigate an additional 1.2 million hectares of rice land to boost rice production and reduce importation.

He said about P93 billion is needed for the next few years to build proper post harvest facilities to reduce rice and corn wastage.

The proposed 2025 budget "will fund essential interventions for agricultural modernization, increased productivity, global competitiveness, and resilience against disasters, climate change, and pandemics," he said.

DA Undersecretary for Finance Nora Oliveros said that while the economy continued to grow, the agriculture sector was not growing as fast as the whole economy. Oliveros said the sector's share in the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017 fell to 8.6 percent in 2023.

Based on data shown by the DA to the House committee, the agriculture and fisheries sector's share in the GDP was 10.1 percent in 2017, 9.7 percent in 2018, and 9.2 percent in 2019. The figure rose to 10.2 percent in 2020 before it fell to 9.6 percent in 2021 and 8.9 percent in 2022. While the budget for agriculture is increasing, Oliveros said the DA wanted to increase its 3.62 percent share of the national budget for 2024 to 4.5 percent.

"However, for 2025, our share has gone down to 3.15 percent", she said, referring to the proposed DA budget in the 2025 National Expenditure Program.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/13/news/national/da-says-p2002b-budget-not-enough/1963546>

THE MANILA TIMES:

180 kgs of illegally caught fish confiscated in Bacolod market



[By Eugene Adiong](#)

August 13, 2024

BACOLOD CITY — Authorities seized 180 kilograms of fish suspected to have been caught using dynamite at the Food Terminal Market of Negros Occidental in Barangay 6, Bacolod City on Sunday.

Personnel from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Philippine Coast Guard and Bacolod Police Station 2 intercepted six boxes of golden trevally, locally known as "badlon," that were reportedly caught through dynamite fishing.

Commander Jansen Benjamin, PCG – Northern Negros Occidental head, said they received information that illegally caught fish were transported from Escalante City to Bacolod City.



DYNAMITED FISHES A total of 180 kilograms of dynamited fishes, mostly Golden Trevally, known locally as 'Badlon,' were seized by authorities at the Food Terminal Market of Negros Occidental in Barangay 6, Bacolod City, on Aug. 11, 2024. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

FRO2 Arlan Mirambel, BFAR fish examiner, said that there are signs that the fish were caught with the use of dynamite.

Mirambel said laboratory analysis will be conducted to verify their suspicion.

"The PCG is keeping a close watch against dynamite fishing in coordination with coastal communities," Benjamin said.

"We are intensifying our campaign against illegal fishing because we must ensure the sustainability of our fish supply for now and the future," he said.

The 180 kilograms of fish valued at about P50,000 was abandoned by its owner who may have detected the presence of the law enforcers, Benjamin said.

The owner of the abandoned fish faces criminal charges for violation of Sec. 126 of Republic Act 10654 (possessing, dealing or disposing of illegally caught or taken fish), he added.

The confiscated fish was given to the Holy Family Homes Inc. in Barangay Cabug, Bacolod City.

Benjamin said the fish are safe for human consumption.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/13/regions/180-kgs-of-illegally-caught-fish-confiscated-in-bacolod-market/1963518>

MANILA STANDARD:

Potato eyed as sustainable food

SpotlightEnvironment and Sustainability



Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr.



By Manila Standard

August 12, 2024, 7:05 pm

Global agrifood systems are facing challenges to feed the world's growing population and the potato can provide an effective solution.

The recent World Potato Congress made the pitch, with Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. expressing confidence in the potential of the tuber as a source of carbohydrate and an alternative to rice, making it a valuable crop for addressing the food needs of the Filipinos.

“I am very hopeful... potato is one of the best solutions available to us today. Potatoes have many uses... from the normal table potatoes to local chips, then French fries, etc,” he said.

Tiu Laurel said he has already approved the implementation of potato seed tissue culture program, which will significantly boost potato production in the country.

André Devaux, a member of the World Potato Congress' board and an independent consultant and scientist emeritus at the International Potato Center (CIP), said cultivating potatoes can provide incomes and sustainable livelihoods for farmers.

He stressed that the potato was a resilient crop with a high yield capacity, a short growing cycle and had a low carbon footprint.

Devaux noted that 1.3 billion people now consume potatoes worldwide but said consumption was still far behind that of wheat and rice. “It is a cash crop but also provides food for domestic consumption. It can play an important role in food crises,” Devaux said.

The DA and Universal Robina Corp., the food manufacturing arm of the Gokongwei Group, signed a five-year agreement to jointly establish and continue the Sustainable Potato Program (SPP).

The SPP, which began in 2019, seeks to develop dependable seed systems, strengthen potato farmers’ organizations, and boost farm productivity and incomes.

Under the agreement, DA regional offices and URC will collaborate to identify and select farmers’ groups for capacity building, training in good agricultural practices, seed multiplication, pest and disease management, storage, handling and marketing.

URC has committed to upscale the project and expand production areas in the Cordilleras, Bukidnon and Davao provinces in partnership with the DA and the United Potato Producers of Benguet and Mountain province and other farmers’ associations in various provinces. DA, FAO News

Chikelu Mba, deputy director of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, said that one out of every ten people in the world was dealing with some form of hunger and malnutrition and in sub-Saharan Africa the rate was even higher, affecting 20 percent of the population.

He said worsening climate change and urbanization had added to the challenges, and that farmers were also confronting issues with pests and diseases and conflicts over natural resources.

“What is required is a meaningful evaluation of the problems that constrain the crop’s value chain so context-specific solutions can be found,” Mba told a webinar ahead of the recent observance of the International Day of Potato.

FAO is committed to support countries to develop resilient and sustainable potato value chains. DA, FAO News

https://www.manilastandard.net/spotlight/environmental-and-sustainability/314483348/potato-eyed-as-sustainable-food.html#google_vignette

ABANTE TONITE:

ASF infected na pork puwede pa kainin – Agri chief

- Abante Tonite
- August 12, 2024



Itinuwid ni Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. ang maling akala na mayroong epekto sa kalusugan ng tao ang pagkain ng karne ng baboy na kontaminado ng African Swine Fever (ASF).

“We have learned from 2019 na yung dating in-implement ay masyadong istrikto. We have come to understand ASF as a disease. Puwede naman `yan lutuin. Ibang bansa nga, meron silang processing plants for infected animals para lutuin at ilata kasi safe naman,” ani Laurel.

Samantala, kaugnay ng ASF outbreak sa walong bayan sa Batangas, sinabi ni Laurel na wala silang nakikitang kakapusan sa suplay ng karneng baboy.

“Hindi naman, wala naman akong nakikitang perceived shortage. kasi ang mangyayari ngayon, `yung mga let’s say katulad sa mga munisipyong merong

ASF, hindi naman total na ila-lockdown at walang lalabas,” sabi ni Laurel sa isang panayam sa Kamara de Representantes.

Tuloy-tuloy din aniya ang implementasyon ng Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion (INSPIRE) program upang mapabilis ang pagdami ng populasyon ng baboy sa bansa.

Ayon pa sa kanya, ilalabas sa susunod na Biyernes ang 10,000 bakuna laban sa ASF na makatutulong sa pagpaparami ng populasyon ng baboy sa bansa.

“Ang lumalabas, ang presyo na narinig ko sa nakita ko ay P450 per dose. At ang vaccine na ito will be given by the government sa mga affected areas, lalo na ang red zones, for free,” dagdag pa ng kalihim. (Billy Begas)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/08/12/asf-infected-na-pork-puwede-pa-kainin-agri-chief/>

REMATE:

Nat'l state of calamity sa ASF 'di kailangan – DA chief

August 12, 2024 18:22



Hindi nakikita ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr ang kakapusan ng suplay ng baboy sa mga susunod na buwan sa kabila ng pagkalat ng African swine fever sa ilang bahagi ng bansa.

, sinabi ni Laurel na ang mga lockdown na nauugnay sa ASF ay nakabatay sa bukid.

“Wala naman akong nakikitang perceived shortage. Kasi ang mangyayari ngayon, yung mga let’s say katulad sa mga munisipyong merong ASF, hindi naman total na ila-lockdown at walang lalabas,” ani Laurel sa reporters sa sideline ng pagdinig ng House Committee on Appropriations sa P200.2-bilyong proposed budget ng Department of Agriculture para sa 2025.

Sinabi ni Laurel na hindi ipatutupad ng DA ang mahigpit na lockdown na ipinataw nang kumalat ang ASF sa ilang probinsya noong 2019.

“Puwede naman ‘yan lutuin. Ibang bansa nga, meron silang processing plants for infected animals para lutuin at ilata kasi safe naman,” aniya pa.

Ang mga apektadong hog raiser ay makakatanggap ng bayad-pinsala mula sa DA.

Babayaran ng P4,000 bawat isa ang mga culled na baboy at biik, P8,000 ang katamtamang laki ng baboy, at P12,000 ang malalaking baboy. Malaking pagtaas ito mula sa P5,000 na ibinigay noon.

“Yun nga ang reason kung bakit tinaas namin at ni-nationalize namin ang indemnification, para talagang katayin na nila, i-surrender nila,” paliwanag ni Laurel.

Sinabi ni Laurel na hindi maapektuhan ang supply ng baboy dahil nagpapatupad din ang DA ng hog repopulation program. Patuloy din ang importasyon.

Hindi rin aniya dapat maapektuhan ng ASF ang presyo ng baboy.

Sinabi rin ni Laurel na dapat walang epekto sa industriya ng processed meat.

Tinanong din si Laurel ukol sa pagsasailalim ng Pilipinas sa national state of calamity dahil sa ASF.

“No, no need. Ito ay naisalokal. Medyo kumakalat pero hindi kasing bilis.”

“And mas aware na kasi ang mga tao ngayon kasi nangyari na dati. Marami rin naman mga facilities may biosecurity. So hindi naman ibig sabihin ang buong munisipyo affected na. It’s still farm-based pa rin,” dagdag pa ng kalihim.

Inihayag din ni Laurel na 10,000 doses ng ASF vaccine ang nakatakdang dumating sa bansa sa susunod na linggo. Ang mga ito ay ipapamahagi sa mga hog raisers nang libre. *RNT*

<https://remate.ph/natl-state-of-calamity-sa-asf-di-kailangan-da-chief/>

ABANTE:

NIA hugas-kamay na inagaw papel ng agri

- Abante News
- August 12, 2024



Nilinaw ng pamunuan ng National Irrigation Administration (NIA) na hindi nila inaagaw ang trabaho ng Department of Agriculture (DA) sa pagbebenta ng murang bigas.

Tugon ito ni NIA administration Eduardo Guillen sa obserbasyon na nag-o-overlap na sila ng trabaho ng DA gayong dapat ang irigasyon ang tutukan nito para masiguro ang maayos na patubig ng mga magsasaka.

Ayon kay Guillen, tumutulong lamang ang NIA sa panawagan ni Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. na magtulungan at magbayanihan para mas maraming mahihirap na mamamayan ang makinabang na P29 program o ang nabibiling P29 kada kilo ng bigas.

“Pagtugon lamang po ito sa panawagan ng ating Pangulo na magtulungan at magbayanihan, kaya tayo tinatangal natin iyong paradigm shift ng mga government agencies na kanya-kanya,” ani Guillen. (Aileen Taliping)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/08/12/nia-hugas-kamay-na-inagaw-papel-ng-agri/>