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# Cebu firm fears rice shortage due to advisory vs biofertilizer

**BY CALVIN CORDOVA**

Aug 19, 2024 06:17 PM

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CEBU CITY — A Cebu-based company has cried foul over a government order that would affect the distribution of its widely used fertilizer.



**ENGR. Grecilda Sanchez shows a public advisory released by the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority that may affect the distribution of a biofertilizer that is highly patronized by rice farmers. (Calvin D. Cordova)**

Engr. Grecilda Sanchez, president and chief executive officer of LactoBiotics Worldwide Corp., said the order of the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA) to stop the distribution of Lactoplant Biofertilizer has serious repercussions.

“This involves national food security,” said Sanchez.

The issue stems from a public advisory released by FPA that practically discourages rice farmers from using the company’s biofertilizer.

“Please be advised that in the agency’s original certification, Lactobiotics Worldwide Corp. needs to conduct the required FPA bioefficacy trial and submit all necessary documents to the agency for the label expansion registration of their product for rice and other crops,” the agency said.

The FPA also warned the public of a tampered certification circulating online that indicated that the agency has already granted Lactoplant a label expansion.

Sanchez, a former Cebu provincial board member and daughter of the late Cebu Vice Gov. Greg Sanchez, said the company has nothing to do with the circulation of the tampered certification.

“To address the current issue, LactoBiotics Worldwide Corp. denies its involvement in the altered certification issued by the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority and strongly condemns the act of falsifying such certifications,” the company said in a statement.

Sanchez narrated that proliferation of the tampered certification started when the company participated in the fertilizer voucher program of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Barugo, Leyte, on Friday, August 16.

Based on their certification, the company still needs to comply with the FPA bioefficacy trial and submit all the necessary documents for label expansion registration to already include rice and other crops.

Lactoplant currently has a certification for use on fruit trees and leafy vegetables. For it be used as a fertilizer for rice, it must be issued with “all crops” certification.

Sanchez added that the company has been asking the FPA to grant them the “all crops” certification but the request has been falling on deaf ears.

Under Chapter III of the FPA’s Fertilizer Regulatory Policies and Implementing Guidelines, fertilizers that are water soluble and fully registered for 10 consecutive years no longer require Bioefficacy Data Generation.

Lactoplant has been registered by FPA, she said.

“The product has been in the market for the last 13 years. It is more affordable compared to other products, farmers enjoy better yields, that’s why this product is patronized by most farmers. It is really a farmer’s choice,” Sanchez said.

Sanchez said the company has been joining rice techno demo and derbies in which Lactoplant yielded very promising outcomes.

In fact, in a techno demo in Barangay Gabi in Ubay, Bohol, Lactoplant was recognized as second Best Biofertilizer and 1st Highest in Actual Yield, Sanchez said.

The product also received the High Yielding Award and Farmer’s Choice Award from the municipality of Carigara in Leyte and the High Yielding Award from the provincial agriculturist in Davao de Oro.

Sanchez said the FPA advisory has affected the delivery of their fertilizers in different regions in the country.

Based on its purchase orders, the company is set to deliver fertilizers for 30,000 hectares of rice farmland in Region 12 and 35,000 hectares of rice farmland in Region 8. The company is also scheduled to deliver fertilizers to 65,000 hectares of rice farmland in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan; 15,000 hectares of rice farmland in Bohol, and another 20,000 hectares in Region 1.

If the company fails to complete those deliveries, the country will lose 20,532,701 bags of rice, Sanchez said.

“So we will just stop eating? Let us tell our farmers that let’s just stop farming?” Sanchez said.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/19/cebu-firm-fears-rice-shortage-due-to-advisory-vs-biofertilizer>

# **PH ready to repatriate Pinoys in Lebanon, documented or not**

**BY BETHEENA UNITE**

Aug 19, 2024 05:06 PM

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The Philippines stands ready to repatriate overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) affected by the escalating tension in Lebanon, whether they are documented or undocumented.

"[H]opefully, again, the situation doesn't get worse but in case, there is a call to be repatriated, then as I said, we're ready with our own crisis management plans," Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac said in an interview in Malacañan on Monday, Aug. 19.

He made the assurance amid the increasing tension between Israel and Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.

"So, hopefully, again, the situation doesn't get worse. But in case, that there is a call to be repatriated, then as I said, we're ready with our own crisis management plans," he said.

Cacdac said so far it is a voluntary repatriation mode, "so all of them are still in the process of discerning or deciding" whether or not they heed the call of the ambassador to come home as the situation may worsen.

The DMW official also said that OFWs – whether documented or undocumented – who wish to avail of the voluntary repatriation offer from the government, will receive the necessary assistance, including vouchers for them to undergo free training courses from Technical Education And Skills Development Authority (TESDA)-accredited institutions.

Although the government has no definite figures in terms of undocumented workers, Cacdac said, "there will be many more who are undocumented."

## **P150,000 cash assistance**

President Marcos has raised the financial assistance for displaced OFWs from P50,000 to P150,000.

According to Cacdac, the increase in financial aid was ordered by the President.

Those who will be coming from war-like areas will be covered by the increased assistance while those who already received the P50,000 in financial assistance are not covered by the increase.

Other government agencies also extended immediate assistance to the displaced OFWs upon their return, Cacdac said.

The Department of Health (DOH) will provide physical checkups upon arrival of the affected OFWs while the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) will extend livelihood and financial assistance.

The Technical Education And Skills Development Authority (TESDA) will provide training vouchers while other agencies such as the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) will provide post-repatriation assistance.

He said the financial assistance applies to documented and undocumented OFWs.

There are 11,360 OFWs in Lebanon, mostly in Beirut. Of the figure, 356 availed the government's repatriation program.

The DOLE will be responsible for the employment facilitation, while the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Tourism (DOT) are ready to assist OFWs wishing to venture into agriculture or tourism-related endeavors, Cacdac said.

The Technical Education And Skills Development Authority (TESDA) will provide necessary training along with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for OFWs opting to venture into business upon their return in the Philippines.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/19/ph-ready-to-repatriate-pinoys-in-lebanon-documented-or-not>

# Villafuerte justifies P88-B budget boost for DA in 2025

BY ELLSON QUISMORIO

Aug 19, 2024 01:18 PM

## AT A GLANCE

- Camarines Sur 2nd district Rep. LRay Villafuerte is batting for an P88-billion increase in the proposed budget of the Department of Agriculture (DA) for 2025 to keep the government "on track to achieving food security, if not sufficiency".



Camarines Sur 2nd district Rep. LRay Villafuerte (PPAB)

Camarines Sur 2nd district Rep. LRay Villafuerte is batting for an P88-billion increase in the proposed budget of the Department of Agriculture (DA) for 2025 to keep the government "on track to achieving food security, if not sufficiency".

In a statement Monday, Aug. 19, Villafuerte said the budget increase will allow the government to by significantly raising spending on priority initiatives such as building irrigation and postharvest facilities, food terminals or processing centers, and Kadiwa outlets nationwide.

"For our country to eventually attain food security, if not sufficiency, the annual budget for agriculture needs to go up in 2025 by at least one percentage point to 4 percent of our GDP (gross domestic product), or equivalent to P88 billion," Villafuerte said.

He suggested during a recent hearing of the House Committee on Appropriations on the proposed DA budget of P200.19 billion for next year that an extra outlay of P88 billion was needed so the DA can, among others, spend

another P25 billion on irrigation, including solar facilities; P10 billion apiece for postharvest facilities and for palay (unhusked rice) productivity programs; and P8 billion for cold storage facilities.

The appropriations panel is right the middle of its per agency deliberations on the P6.352-trillion National Expenditure Program (NEP) for 2025, or the proposed national budget.

Villafuerte said that portions of the remaining P35-billion additional allocation for 2025 should go to building fishports (P4 billion) and FTI (Food Terminal Inc.) facilities at one facility per region (P4 billion), for an intensive production of coconuts (P3 billion) and high-value crops (P1 billion), for livestock development (P2 billion), and for building more Kadiwa stores (P1 billion).

The former governor said that inadequate funding for the agriculture sector has led to supply and pricing problems on rice and other farm goods, which, in turn, have caused upward pressures on headline inflation that hurt most especially the ordinary consumers.

Citing Octa Research data, Villafuerte said that poor and low-income families find it difficult to make both ends meet because rice and other basic food expenses account for 51.38 percent of the incomes of the poorest 30 percent of Filipinos.

“And the solution, basically, is to increase the budget of the DA,” the Bicol solon said.

The DA originally proposed to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) a budget of P518.8 billion for next year under the NEP that Malacañang eventually submitted to the 19th Congress following the opening of its third and final session.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/19/villafuerte-justifies-p88-b-budget-boost-for-da-in-2025>



**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# For Bicol's Farm Sector Rural resurgence requires rail revival

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#), [Elijah Felice Rosales](#) - The Philippine Star

August 20, 2024 | 12:00am



Photo shows a Philippine National Railways (PNR) train as it arrives in España Station, Manila on July 15, 2023.

STAR / Ernie Penaredondo

## **SPECIAL REPORT**

**(First of two parts)**

LIBMANAN, Camarines Sur, Philippines — Robert Buayaban grew up hearing and imagining stories of train rides on the fabled Bicol Express in the 1980s, mostly from his grandparents who were farmers.

It's a story that has been passed on from one generation of Buayabans to another: sacks of rice, vegetables and even pigs loaded onto a train en route to the Philippine capital – Legazpi to Manila; Manila to Legazpi.

Those stories remained stories for someone who never experienced the train ride himself, as he grew up some 170 kilometers away from mainland Bicol.

But since embracing his farming roots, 38-year-old Robert, who was born in Masbate, aspires to see his crops being loaded into a train en route to Laguna or even to Manila in the future.

It would be life-changing, he says.

But just how life changing would it be? Buayaban makes it simple: for every P100 spent on a vegetable, about P30 goes to logistics alone.

It is a significant portion of their costs, which he says could otherwise be used for other important things like for planting materials or for the education of their children.

“Malaking tulong kung magkaka-tren kasi malaking bawas sa gasolina, sa drayber at mababawasan iyong wastage namin,” Buayaban tells The STAR during a visit to his three-hectare farm here.

“Imagine, iyong talong dito sa Bicol ay P72 per kilogram pero sa Maynila ay P100 per kilogram. Ang sitaw dito P20 per kilogram, sa Maynila P70 per kilogram,” he adds.

But farmers who do not have the capacity to transport directly to Manila are forced to rent trucks with a going rate of P4 per kilogram. But that amount – seemingly small – does not take into account the possible losses through pilferage, and wastage that they may incur along the 10 hours to 12 hours of land travel from Bicol to Manila.

Without the proper handling and environment for transporting crops, farmers run the risk of spoiling their goods even before they arrive in Balintawak or in Divisoria, the main trading posts in Metro Manila.

Those losses could spell the difference between making a profit or not.

## **Bicol and agriculture**

Around 70 percent of Bicol’s agricultural output is exported to other areas outside Luzon, most especially in Metro Manila.

Bicol serves as one of the critical suppliers for some vegetables that are sold in the Metro such as red chili, eggplant, squash, stringbeans and other crops that form part of the so-called pinakbet veggies.

At the height of the COVID pandemic in 2020, Bicol was a saving grace for people living in Metro Manila. The province was the source for their daily supply of

vegetables and crops, transporting more than 200 metric tons of fruits and vegetables to Metro Manila during the nationwide lockdown.

The growth of the contribution of agriculture, forestry and fishing to Bicol's economy has been steady at an average rate of five percent annually between 2000 and 2014.

But in the years that followed or from 2014 to 2023, the growth of the sector has been challenged, struggling to sustain the expansion posted in the previous years as it recorded an average dip of 0.4 percent every year.

The contraction in agricultural production and the advancement of other sectors shrank the share of agriculture, forestry and fishing to Bicol's overall economy.

From a share of 27.5 percent in 2000, agriculture, forestry and fishing is now contributing 14.2 percent to the region's gross domestic product, the lowest share in the past 24 years.

In recent years, Bicol's agriculture suffered numerous challenges from extreme weather conditions, including typhoons that battered the region, diseases such as the African swine fever to high production costs and low farm mechanization levels.

Despite contractions in agricultural output, Bicol remains as the top producer of the following crops nationwide: first in abaca, pili nut and squash, second in sweet potato, third in pineapples, fifth in gabi/taro, sixth in string beans, seventh in cassava and eggplant and eight in coconut.

“One way to encourage our farmers to produce more and market their produce is to be given a more efficient logistics system,” says Adelina Losa, chief of the agribusiness and marketing division of the Department of Agriculture - Regional Field Office V.

“Imagine, if the vegetable is sold in Manila at P100 per kilogram, at least P20 of that goes to logistics alone,” Losa adds.

The revival of the train system for cargo would not just benefit some 600,000 farmers in the Bicol region, but its entire population too. Bicol also needs to rely on other regions like up north in Ilocos and Cordillera for its supply of highland vegetables such as lettuce, cabbage, pechay and even onions.

“Farmers are asking when will the train be revived? There is already a route toward Legazpi, so when is the Manila-bound route going to happen?” Losa says.

## **Opening opportunities**

Some 70 kilometers away from Libmanan, Arvin Reola, a corn and vegetable farmer in Iriga, shares his Bicol Express story. For him, a train does not just transport goods, it also transcends markets.

A reliable train system makes farmers more competitive and allows them to earn more as it lets them bring their produce to other markets that offer higher prices for their crops, Arvin says.

For example, corn fetched P18 per kilogram during the last harvest season in Camarines Sur, but the commodity was being bought at P21 per kilogram in nearby provinces.

But since farmers have no means to transport their goods far away, they are left with no choice but to sell within his immediate vicinity, often to the kompradas or traders who can buy bulk but at a much lower price.

In turn, it is the traders who have the capacity to transport goods to bigger buyers like feed millers that earn more.

“Iyong piso, dos, tres, malaking bagay na iyon para sa aming magsasaka. Pahabaan talaga ito ng pisi para may pantawid-tawid kami,” says the 28-year-old farmer who cultivates corn, vegetables and rears livestock in Iriga, Camarines Sur.

“The train system opens opportunities for local farmers to have choices if they will sell their produce locally or to other regions. It stimulates competition,” Reola adds.

He recalled that one time they envied the prevailing live weight prices for hogs in Batangas. Back then, Batangas prices were P20 per kilogram higher than the prices in Bicol, which meant that 10 pigs would fetch P20,000 more if sold in Batangas.

“We can already pay our laborers and buy other farming inputs with that money,” he says.

## **Imagined future**

The revival of the railway in Bicol for cargo has long been on the table of the government.

In fact, it has been identified as one of the critical projects that would contribute to the overall economic growth of the region under the Marcos administration’s economic blueprint.

The government is talking to multilateral agencies for possible loans to finance the P175-billion rebuilding of the Bicol Express through the Philippine National

Railways South Long Haul, which was originally pitched to the government of China.

Rep. Brian Yamsuan of Bicol Saro Party-list has been pushing for the revival of the Bicol Express line to fast-track the economic development in the region.

He has even floated the idea of using the Maharlika fund, the nation's first sovereign wealth fund, to usher in what he calls the "renaissance" of the Bicol Express.

Yamsuan emphasizes that it is not only Bicolanos that would benefit from such an infrastructure program but the entire Luzon as it would reduce food prices within the island region.

"Lower logistics costs would translate into higher incomes for farmers and traders, and would lower food prices for consumers," he says.

But as these plans remain on paper, farmers like Arvin and Robert focus on the tangibles: improving productivity at all costs. Robert plans to create a fishpond in his farm, thanks to a solar powered irrigation system from the government that allowed him to have ample water resources.

"Sana sa susunod na mga taon, itong mga talong ay sa tren na isasakay," says Buayaban, who now cultivates at least 10,000 trees of eggplants.

*To be concluded*

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/08/20/2379032/bicols-farm-sector-rural-resurgence-requires-rail-revival>

## Miracle man



### [VIRTUAL REALITY](#) - [Tony Lopez](#) - The Philippine Star

August 20, 2024 | 12:00am

#### **President Ferdinand “Bongbong” R. Marcos Jr. has a miracle man.**

He is Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., 57, a fishing, canning and ship repair tycoon. As the president and CEO, he built the family-owned Frabelle Fishing Corp., which he joined at age 19 to feed his eldest, into the largest integrated multinational deep-sea fishing and food conglomerate in the Philippines, if not in the world. He modernized the fishing business.

According to his dad, Francis Sr., were it not for Francis Jr.’s boldness, courage and imagination, the family would not have lasted this far or succeeded immensely in deep sea fishing and other businesses.

A college dropout, Kiko or Frannie learned the vagaries of living through life at sea, which Quora describes as “fun, scary, risky, magical” and may I add, awesomely profitable. Frabelle’s fishing boats would venture as far out as Indonesia and Papua New Guinea and for two and a half to three years out in the high seas. “The Philippines is no longer a fishing paradise,” he laments, thanks to unmitigated dynamite fishing.

Today, Kiko is a multi-billionaire (easily P10 billion net), with a teen-looking beauty for a partner and a business network here and abroad and friends in high places (like BBM).

In college, I joined a university medical mission where we stayed in a decrepit Navy boat in the high seas for six weeks. Food, water and fuel supplies were rationed. Weather was unpredictable. And the islands we visited were wonderful for the people’s warmth and hospitality and the exotic food. So I know a little of life at sea.

Joining the government, Kiko gave up a life of excitement and luxury (except the teen-looking partner) to have a boss (BBM, a boyhood buddy), to live a modest life (according to the Constitution), be a public servant (to 116 million Filipinos) and do the impossible – produce a rice surplus and achieve food self-sufficiency. If Sec. Kiko could execute his marching orders in the next four and a half years, he would make Hercules' 12 tasks pale in comparison.

Since becoming agriculture secretary himself in July 2022, BBM had been on the lookout for a permanent helmsman at what used to be government's premier department. Agriculture in the 1960s accounted for as much as 60 percent of total economic production or GDP. It was the backbone of the economy, then the most prosperous in Asia, after Japan. Aggie's share has steadily fallen, to 30 percent by 1970, 21 percent in 1992-1998 and to 8.6 percent by 2023, the lowest ever. In the meantime, the population tripled, from 37.5 million in 1970 to 116 million today, an increase of 209 percent.

In five decades, agriculture output grew just 0.2 percent per year on average while the population swelled 2-3 percent per year. The result was massive food shortages, 25 percent of demand, and never-ending rice crises.

The rice shortage is four to five million tons a year, which have to be imported. At \$600 per ton a four-million-ton deficit is \$2.4 billion (P140 billion), money that could fund the entire Department of Agriculture in a year, or six critical departments combined – foreign affairs (P47.5 billion), labor (P45.3 billion), DOST (P28.5 billion), agrarian reform (P10.4 billion), migrant workers (P7.8 billion) and tourism (P3.3 billion). Rice hit above \$1,000 per ton in April 2008. That's how expensive rice imports are.

BBM is unfazed about the challenges at DA. He knows Sec. Kiko will deliver. "I know his persona," BBM declares, "he works hard, he understands the business."

"Farmers and fishermen are close to my heart," the DA chief confides. "I have personally witnessed their hardships and known their dreams." "I listen and work with them," the secretary told me in an interview. Kiko meets farmers weekly in his Quezon City office.

BBM became convinced of his DA chief's boldness and management prowess when he inaugurated last July 2023 the 25-megawatt Lake Mainit hydro power project, a joint venture between Frabelle Fishing Corp. and a large Japanese power company. Francis made it possible "after a long period of challenges." It took a lot of courage, money and engineering skills.

On board Frabelle's huge fishing vessels for long periods at sea, Francis had to familiarize himself with plenty of high-tech machinery and equipment, like an engineer.

Together with DAR's and the budgets of attached corporations, agriculture will get P211.3 billion next year, from P165 billion net this year. Kiko also will get \$2.2 billion of official development assistance (ODA) for agriculture. Plus P100 billion of irrigation budget from DPWH. It takes P1 million to irrigate a hectare of farm.

With irrigation and technology, Kiko thinks he can produce up to eight tons per hectare of palay from the present four tons. It's now possible to double rice yields, he says. Nueva Ecija does it. The DA chief will also put up drying and warehousing facilities to stabilize rice supply and prices.

Kiko will employ an army of 1,500 agricultural extension workers – one for each town, to handhold 2.9 million rice farmers nationwide. He calls his new Green Revolution Masagana Rice Program ng Ang Bagong Pilipinas. The aggie extension workers will be monitored through GPS. DA is putting up a P1-billion digital monitoring center to oversee the government's various food programs and personnel.

Can Francis engineer an agricultural miracle? With bold visioning, technology and resources as his command (his DA budget has been increased to P128 billion from P108.5 billion in 2023, the eighth largest Cabinet budget), he is hopeful he can bring a sea change.

DA cannot promise a rice surplus. Imports will continue. Rice retail prices, however, will go down. Food is 55 percent of a poor family's budget. Rice alone eats up 20 percent of that.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/08/20/2379043/miracle-man>



**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Procured 10,000 doses of ASF vaccine now in Philippines

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

August 20, 2024 | 12:00am



Pigs that test positive for ASF would not be included in the controlled vaccination.

AFP / File

MANILA, Philippines — The 10,000 doses of vaccine against African swine fever (ASF) acquired by the government through emergency procurement have arrived in the country, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said yesterday.

“The vaccines have arrived and are still at the Bureau of Customs,” Arnel de Mesa, DA assistant secretary and spokesman, said.

De Mesa said ASF vaccination would start after necessary procedures are completed.

Pigs that test positive for ASF would not be included in the controlled vaccination.

“Hogs that will pass the criteria will proceed to the vaccination,” he added.

Asis Perez, DA undersecretary for policy, planning and regulation, said the agency has completed a series of consultations in Calabarzon to refine protocols concerning movement of healthy hogs amid outbreaks in several areas, particularly Batangas.

Perez said that under the proposed guideline, the DA would allow movement of healthy pigs from red zones or areas with active cases to ensure a stable supply of pork and protect the livelihood of hog raisers.

“The government will ease regulation, but we have to make sure that only live and healthy pigs are transported to prevent the spread of ASF. It’s important to ensure that infected animals stay in red zones” Perez said.

Meanwhile, the provincial governments of Isabela, Laguna and Quezon confirmed the spread of ASF in their areas.

Local officials expressed fear that a second wave of ASF outbreaks might occur in their jurisdictions.

Mary Grace Bustamante, Laguna chief veterinarian, said that outbreaks were logged in Alaminos, Calamba, Nagcarlan and San Pablo.

Bustamante said that in 2020, the local hog industry suffered from the effects of ASF.

Quezon chief veterinarian Flomella Caguicla said at least eight of 41 towns in the province are affected by the virus.

Caguicla said among the affected municipalities are Candelaria, Lopez, Macalelon, Mauban, San Antonio, San Andres, San Narciso and Tiaong.

Isabela Gov. Rodito Albano said five barangays in two towns recorded outbreaks and more than 100 hogs have been culled in these areas.

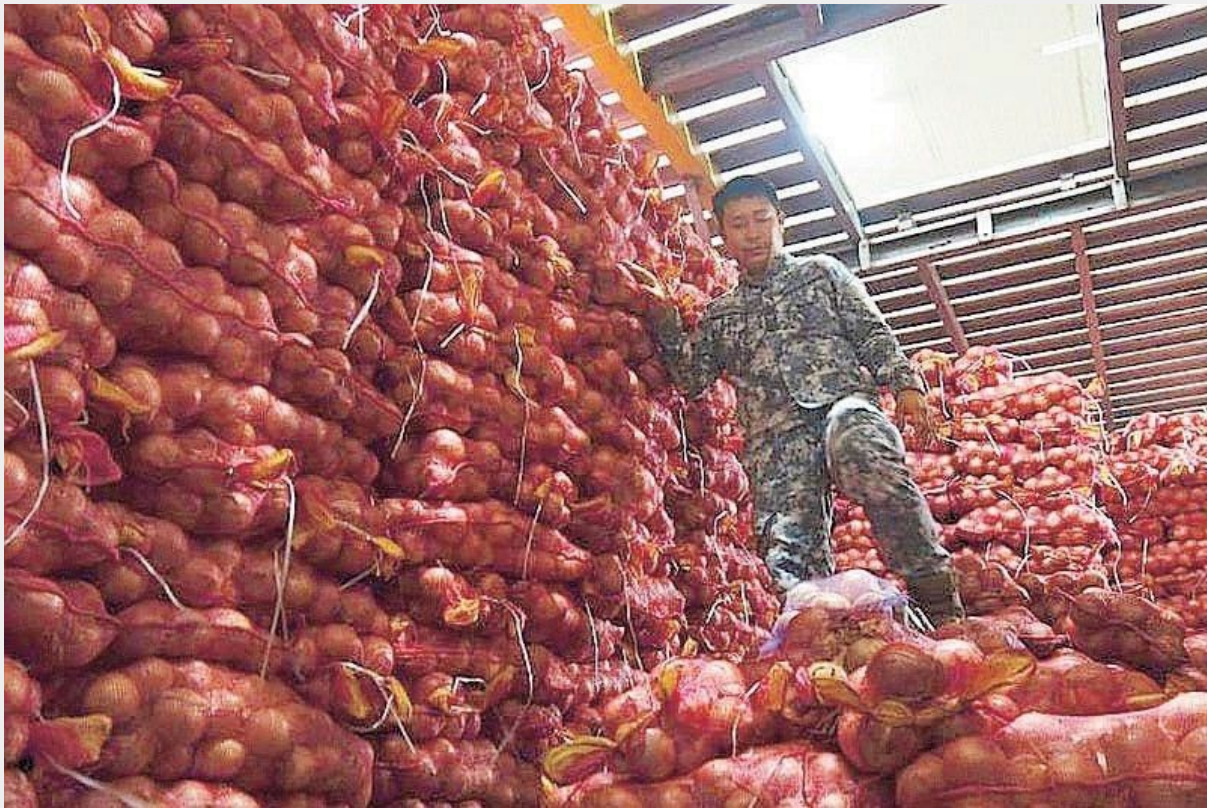
<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/08/20/2379060/procured-10000-doses-asf-vaccine-now-philippines>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Over P30 million smuggled agricultural products seized

[Evelyn Macairan](#), [Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

August 20, 2024 | 12:00am



A law enforcer examines smuggled onions confiscated during a raid on a warehouse in Navotas on August 15, 2024.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — At least 300 tons of smuggled agricultural products worth more than P30 million were confiscated by the Department of Agriculture (DA) and Bureau of Customs (BOC) during a raid on a storage facility in Navotas.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio, Navotas Mayor John Rey Tiangco and Rep. Toby Tiangco inspected the vegetables yesterday.

Tiu Laurel said the smuggled farm products include 132.75 tons of white onions valued at P21.2 million, 89.89 tons of carrots worth P13.48 million as well as tomatoes and mushrooms.



The Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) has yet to issue Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearances (SPSICs) for the onions and tomatoes, according to Tiu Laurel.

He said the raid was part of the government's efforts to curb unfair trade practices that undermine the livelihoods of Filipino farmers as well as threaten domestic food safety and security.

A composite team from the DA-Inspectorate and Enforcement Office, BPI's National Plant Quarantine Services Division, BOC and other law enforcement units raided a warehouse in Navotas on Thursday.

The raid yielded smuggled vegetables as well as pasta and pickled salad.

"We want to assure our farmers that we will protect their livelihood from smuggling and other unfair trade practices. Actions such as these are meant to ensure food safety and promote food security," Tiu Laurel said.

He said smuggling not only deprives the government of crucial import duties, but also hampers the growth of local industries and their ability to create jobs, which is vital in alleviating poverty.

"The coordinated effort of the DA, BOC and the Navotas local government in this successful raid highlights how a whole-of-government approach is crucial in stamping out smuggling and other illegal trade activities," Tiu Laurel said.

BPI director Glen Panganiban said the bureau has taken samples of the smuggled vegetables for food safety testing.

"These samples will be tested for the presence of harmful microorganisms and pesticide residues. These have no sanitary and phytosanitary permits, so we want to make sure these vegetables will pose no risk to the public," Panganiban said.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/08/20/2379074/over-p30-million-smuggled-agricultural-products-seized>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# MPIC eyes protein segment in agribusiness

[Richmond Mercurio](#) - The Philippine Star

August 20, 2024 | 12:00am



For its agribusiness, MPIC made its entry into the sector in 2022 through a partnership with the Carmen's Best Group, which was followed by another agri venture last year with the acquisition of 34.76 percent ownership in Axelum Resources Corp., a manufacturer and exporter globally of high-quality coconut products.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Conglomerate Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC) intends to fortify its agribusiness as it looks to further diversify its portfolio by venturing into the protein segment.

“We continuously want to look at areas where we can implement technology that will increase yield. We want to enter the protein segment because part of our core strategy is to look at the Filipino plate. We want to take a look at the protein segment which would either be meat, eggs or aquaculture,” Metro Pacific Agro Ventures (MPAV) president and CEO Juan Victor Hernandez said.

“All of those are very interesting. To be frank, for meat, we are kind of cautious because of ASF (African swine fever) in terms of pork. For chicken, there’s avian flu. But for eggs, that’s a very interesting area that we would take a look at so we’re looking at that,” he said.

**Hernandez said the group is also exploring ways to further utilize carabaos.**

“We like to look at carabaos because we have a lot of carabaos in the Philippines. It’s a quintessential symbol of agriculture. But we only use it for tilling the land,” Hernandez said.

“In other countries, they actually milk the carabao. So if I can get, for example, two liters from every farmer, that’s extra income for the farmer that I can process into cheese,” he said.

For its agribusiness, MPIC made its entry into the sector in 2022 through a partnership with the Carmen’s Best Group, which was followed by another agri venture last year with the acquisition of 34.76 percent ownership in Axelum Resources Corp., a manufacturer and exporter globally of high-quality coconut products.

Last month, MPAV announced agreements to acquire 100 percent of Universal Harvester Dairy Farms Inc. (UHDFI) in a bid to continue its mission to provide fresh, high-quality dairy products for the Filipino people.

Located in Maramag, Bukidnon, UHDFI operates under the Bukidnon Milk Company brand.

It produces fresh milk, flavored milk, yogurt and cheese products, with presence primarily focused on key cities in Visayas and Mindanao.

“Our ice cream business is growing double. In fact, our first half number this year in terms of ice cream, we’ve already achieved the full year revenue of 2022 in ice cream when we invested in Carmen’s Best. So that’s an achievement that we’re proud of. And we are going to continue to push on the ice cream side,” Hernandez said.

“Ice cream is doing well and we have plans to grow. Now with the new supply we can now work on expanding our dairy line, which is fresh milk. We will now start the growth path for the dairy line,” he said.

Beyond investments in production, MPAV intends to further promote the dairy ecosystem with corn plantations and silage production in other parts of the country.

Other MPAV developments include Metro Pacific Dairy Farms, a modern and integrated dairy facility in Laguna scheduled to be operational in the first quarter of 2025 and Metro Pacific Fresh Farms, the largest vegetable greenhouse facility in the country located in San Rafael, Bulacan scheduled to be operational by fourth quarter this year.

“That’s three and a half hectares worth of greenhouses, the largest in the country and we will be producing 800 metric tons of vegetables annually,” Hernandez said.

“And we’ve been given instructions already next year that the three and a half hectares, we will double to seven, which is the original plan. Seven hectares to produce 1,600 metric tons of vegetables,” he said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/08/20/2379026/mpic-eyes-protein-segment-agribusiness>

# PH ups monetary aid to returning OFWs from Lebanon to P150,000

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 03:44 PM August 19, 2024



A commercial aircraft takes off from the runway of Beirut International airport near the city's southern suburbs on August 9, 2024. Many in Beirut's southern suburbs, a packed residential area known as Dahiyeh which is also a Hezbollah bastion, have been trying to leave, fearing full-blown war between the Iran-backed group and Israel in the wake of the commander's killing. Agence France-Presse

MANILA, Philippines — Amid ongoing tensions in the Middle East, the Philippine government has increased the financial assistance for repatriating overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) from Lebanon to P150,000, the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) said on Monday.

According to Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Cacdac, the monetary aid was increased on the order of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. after he convened with the DMW and other relevant agencies.

“Sabi ni Pangulo, repasuhin yung financial assistance rates. So, from P50,000, ginawanan natin P75,000 from DMW, P75,000 from OWWA (Overseas Workers Welfare Administration),” said Cacdac in a chance interview with Malacañang reporters.

(The President said, review the financial assistance rates. So, from P50,000, we increased it to P75,000 from DMW, P75,000 from OWWA.)



“So, that’s P150,000 financial assistance upon return,” he added.

Both documented and undocumented repatriates will receive the assistance, said Cacdac.

Asked if the increased aid would be effective for all repatriates, Cacdac said it would only be for those coming from “war-like areas.”

Meanwhile, other government agencies will offer additional forms of assistance. The Department of Health will provide physical and psychosocial checkups to repatriates upon their arrival. The Department of Social Welfare and Development will offer both livelihood and financial assistance, while the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority will provide training vouchers.

“We’ve also partnered with Agriculture Sec. [Francisco Tiu] Laurel, and Tourism Sec. Christina Frasco in case returning OFWs would wish to endeavor into agri-related and tourism-related endeavors,” Cacdac said.

On Friday, the Philippine Embassy in Beirut urged Filipinos to leave the country while the airport is still operational.

The embassy issued the call after an Israeli strike hit southern Lebanon.

Cacdac said there are approximately 11,360 OFWs in Lebanon, most of whom are in Beirut. So far, no injuries among Filipinos have been reported as a result of the Israeli attacks.

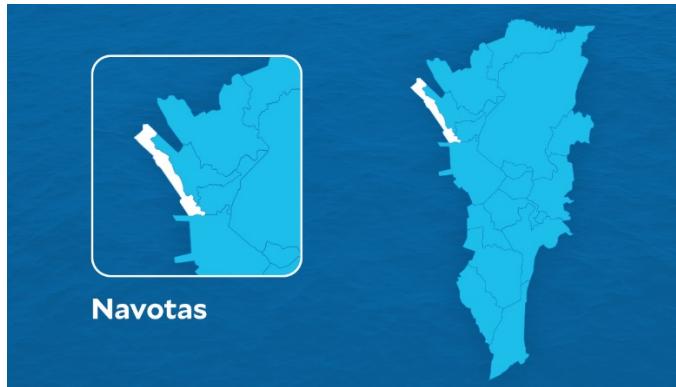
Around 356 OFWs have already returned from Lebanon, including 15 last weekend, while about 1,000 more have expressed intent to go back to the Philippines.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/245748/ph-ups-monetary-aid-to-returning-ofws-from-lebanon-to-p150000>

# **BOC seizes over P34-M smuggled agri goods inside a Navotas cold storage**

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lala](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLalaINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 08:22 PM August 19, 2024



Navotas. INQUIRER FILES

MANILA, Philippines — Smuggled agricultural products said to be worth P34.68 million were seized by combined operatives from the Bureau of Customs (BOC) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Navotas City, the BOC said on Monday.

Reports from the BOC showed that they received intelligence information from an informant, which led the two agencies to seek the assistance of the Navotas Police Station and local barangay officials to inspect two cold storage units containing a variety of agricultural goods.

Among the items discovered are significant quantities of the following:

- **onions**
- **carrots**
- **tomatoes**
- **enoki mushrooms**
- **Chinese noodles**
- **Chinese kimchi**

The first cold storage facility had at least 132.75 tons of white onions, believed to worth P21.2 million. The other facility contained 89.89 tons of imported carrots, worth some P13.48 million. Both facilities contained goods that were moved into the country without proper payment of duties and taxes.

“This successful operation is a testament to our relentless effort to crack down on the smuggling of agricultural products,” Customs Commissioner Bien Rubio said in a statement.

“We are resolute in our mission to protect our local farmers and industries from unfair competition and ensure that those who violate our laws are held accountable. This is just one of many steps we are taking to intensify our crackdown on smuggling activities,” he added.

Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (CIIS) Director Verne Enciso meanwhile said that the warehouse owners, representatives, lessees, lessors, or occupants refused to receive the Letter of Authority (LOA) issued by the commissioner.

Intelligence Group Deputy Commissioner Juvymax Uy meanwhile lauded the agencies’ efforts to respond to the intelligence report that they verified.

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“Because the warehouse representatives refused to acknowledge the LOA, they resorted to forcing open the inner gate door of the cold storage and container doors,” Enciso said.

“Coordinating with relevant agencies ensures the safety of our markets and consumers. These operations are crucial in driving the message to these organizations that our intention is to pulverize them to the ground,” Uy added.

As of now, BOC agents with the help of police officers, local government staffers from Navotas’ Business Permit and Licensing Office (BPLO), and barangay officials have sealed the warehouse doors to secure the confiscated items.

According to BOC, the owners and representatives of the cold storage facilities may face complaints for violation of Section 1400 (Misdeclaration in goods declaration) and Section 117 (Regulated importation) of Republic Act No. 10863, also known as the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act. *With reports from Arianne Denisse Cagsawa, trainee*

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1974463/boc-seizes-over-p34-m-smuggled-agri-goods-inside-a-navotas-cold-storage>

# Agri co-ops: Thailand's way

By: [Cielito F. Habito](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:55 AM August 20, 2024

**INQUIRER  
OPINION**

**President Marcos himself has declared farmers' cooperatives to be crucial to improving Philippine agriculture and ensuring food security. But unless we dramatically boost the institutional and budgetary support for them, all that would remain rhetoric, and will get our deeply troubled agriculture sector nowhere.**

**Cielito F. Habito**  
Columnist  
NO FREE LUNCH

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER **INQUIRERPLUS**  
Philippine Daily Inquirer newspaper's  
E-reader and digital version

Thailand calls its agriculture ministry the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. There's no better sign that the Thais consider co-ops to be central to agricultural development. I wish our government would think the same way. We all know how Thai agriculture has left ours far behind.

Cooperativism officially started in the Philippines in 1914, when the Philippine Congress passed the rural credit law. Thailand's Ministry of Finance established a cooperative section a year later. Both countries saw the birth of their first formal cooperatives in 1916: the Agricultural Credit Cooperative Association of Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija in the Philippines, and the Wat Chan Cooperative Unlimited Liability in Phitsanulok, Thailand. Both were inspired by the German

Raiffeisen credit cooperative model, which had become popular in Europe at the time. Both countries saw the number of credit co-ops multiply in succeeding years, and by 1930, there were 571 such associations all over the Philippines.

Fast-forward to the present, and our Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) reports having 7,092 agricultural co-ops registered as of 2022 with a total of 1.89 million members—which is only about a third of our 5.56 million farm households nationwide. The latest figures I could find for Thailand were for 2017, when they had 3,982 agricultural co-ops with a total of 6.81 million members, covering nearly all (95 percent) of their 7.15 million farm households. Average farm size in Thailand is 4.01 hectares, three times our 1.29 hectares, which means that their co-ops not only cover a far higher proportion of their farm households, but far greater farm area as well. These numbers give us a strong clue on why Thai agriculture has left ours far behind, be it in production, diversification, or export volumes. Thailand has clearly made good use of agri co-ops to boost productivity in their farms and raise their farmers' incomes.

What exactly did they do differently to widen and strengthen their agri co-ops? The glaring difference has been in the institutional and budgetary support that the Thai government has provided for them, especially their promotion, expansion, and development. How they named their agriculture ministry already speaks volumes. The legal mandate covering their co-ops is the Cooperative Act of 1999 (Buddhist Era 2542) which superseded the original Cooperative Act of 1968 (B.E. 2511). The updated law provides for an impressive comprehensive package of institutional and resource support for co-ops, which in Thailand are predominantly agricultural co-ops (56 percent of all co-ops, vs only 29 percent in the Philippines).

Key elements in the law are (1) a top-level inter-ministry Board of National Cooperative Development, providing policy guidance and coordination; (2) the Cooperative League of Thailand, a nongovernment apex body created by the 1968 act that is supported by mandatory contributions from its co-op members; (3) separation of promotion and developmental functions from regulation and audit functions within the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives via the Cooperative Promotion Department (CPD), Cooperative Auditing Department and a Registrar of Cooperatives; and (4) financing support from the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives that was established in 1966, and a Cooperative Development Fund (CDF) to support co-ops, funded by national budget subsidies, donations, proceeds from sale of properties, and interest income. I couldn't find a more recent figure, but even 20 years ago, the CDF alone amounted to 3 billion baht (P4.26 billion then), dwarfing our CDA's entire budget of P700 million this year, split between its development and regulatory functions. CPD's annual budget then was 3.64 billion baht (P5.17 billion), with 2,304 permanent employees nationwide. Our CDA now has 882 positions, with only 670 filled.

Besides funding support, our agri co-op system needs far broader institutional and governance support as well, which CDA alone cannot provide. Restoring the Bureau of Agricultural Cooperatives Development in the Department of Agriculture (abolished when CDA was created) would provide our counterpart to Thailand's CPD to focus on promotion and development of farmers' co-ops, and loop in the remaining two-thirds of our farmers still not belonging to one. Despite its name and mandate, many see CDA to be more prominently focused on and equipped for regulation, a function usually at odds with promotion and development in the same agency. President Marcos himself has declared farmers' cooperatives to be crucial to improving Philippine agriculture and ensuring food security. But unless we dramatically boost the institutional and budgetary support for them, all that would remain rhetoric, and will get our deeply troubled agriculture sector nowhere.

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<https://opinion.inquirer.net/176140/agri-co-ops-thailands-way>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# DA launches trial test of ASF vax in Batangas

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:25 AM August 20, 2024



**HEALTH CHECK** Pigs are inspected at a livestock checkpoint in Cavite province for symptoms of African swine fever to prevent the spread of the disease. —Richard A. Reyes

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is preparing to vaccinate some hogs in Batangas province against African swine fever (ASF) this week following the arrival of 10,000 vaccine doses from Vietnam on Monday.

The inoculation campaign is part of a wider controlled testing of the vaccine, which the DA purchased via emergency procurement.

Sought for comment, Pork Producers Federation of the Philippines president Rolando Tambago expressed hope that a vaccine would become available to help the swine industry recover from the severe impact of ASF.

“The efficacy and safety of the ASF vaccine from Vietnam remains to be seen as the 10,000 doses will still be for ‘controlled trial’ per information from DA-BAI (Bureau of Animal Industry),” Tambago said in a Viber message.

“We are really hoping for that potential ASF vaccine to finally be available as it will have a huge impact on the pork industry,” he added.



Tambago said that since the 2019 ASF outbreak, the estimated industry-wide losses have been at least P100 billion.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Constante Palabrica said the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had set strict requirements for controlled testing to ensure vaccine efficiency, including genome sequencing of the virus to ensure that inoculation would not result in mutations.

In a radio interview, Palabrica said the DA would outline the rules of engagement before the start of the controlled vaccination in Lobo town, reportedly the ground zero of the ASF outbreak in the country.

#### **Advisory board**

Palabrica said the DA had convened an advisory board composed of academicians, scientists and experts to help them gather additional data and determine the effectiveness of the doses.

He explained that the vaccine would be injected only in breeders and growers. But before this, blood would be drawn from the hogs to check whether or not there was an active infection.

Other vaccine manufacturers from the United States, South Korea and Vietnam have also asked the FDA to include them in the controlled testing to be conducted by BAI, he added.

Before the vaccines arrived in the country, some DA officials met with local government officials, agriculturists from Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon) and industry groups over the weekend to discuss proposed guidelines to ease the transport of hogs nationwide.

“The government will ease regulation but we have to make sure only live and healthy pigs are transported, not the infected ones, to avoid the spread of ASF. That’s why it’s important that we ensure infected animals stay in red zones,” Agriculture Undersecretary Asis Perez said.

The DA recently approved a higher rate for indemnification of ASF-infected pigs—P4,000 for piglets, P8,000 for medium-sized hogs and P12,000 for sows and bigger hogs. The rate was previously at P5,000 per animal regardless of size.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1974522/da-launches-trial-test-of-asf-vax-in-batangas>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Tons of suspected smuggled agriculture products seized in Navotas

By: [Jane Bautista](#) - Reporter / [@janebautistaINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:15 AM August 20, 2024



**SMUGGLED GREENS** Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. (second from left) and Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio (right) inspect around P30-million worth of suspected agricultural products found in warehouses in Navotas City. With them are Navotas Rep. Toby Tiangco and Mayor John Rey Tiangco. — Richard A. Reyes

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Customs (BOC) has seized from two cold storage units in Navotas City millions of pesos worth of agricultural products believed to have been smuggled into the country during a joint operation conducted last week with the Department of Agriculture.

“Inside the storage units, authorities found significant quantities of onions, carrots, tomatoes, enoki mushrooms, Chinese noodles and Chinese kimchi. These goods were allegedly stored without proper payment of duties and taxes owed to the government,” the BOC said in a statement on Monday.

One of the storage units contained 132.75 tons of white onions valued at P21.2 million, while the other housed 89.89 tons of imported carrots worth an estimated P13.48 million.

The BOC also reported finding 360 kilos of tomatoes, 10 kilos of enoki mushrooms, and 92.25 tons of imported white onions in a 40-foot container van. Their total estimated value was not disclosed.

According to the BOC, it received a tip from a confidential informant that led to a surveillance operation targeting a compound suspected of keeping smuggled agricultural products.

With the help of the Northern Police District-Navotas Police Station and local barangay officials, the team conducted an inspection on Aug. 15 and discovered the two cold storage units containing the illegal goods.

### **LOA refused**

According to Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service Director Verne Enciso, the warehouse owners, representatives, lessees, lessors, or occupants refused to accept the letter of authority (LOA) issued by Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio.

“Because the warehouse representatives refused to acknowledge the LOA, they resorted to forcing open the inner gate door of the cold storage and container doors,” Enciso said.

Following the raid, the BOC reported that its agents promptly sealed the warehouse doors to secure the confiscated items.

The owners and representatives of the cold storage facilities could face charges for violating Sec. 1400 (misdeclaration in goods declaration) and Sec. 117 (regulated importation) in relation to Sec. 1113 (property subject to seizure and forfeiture) of Republic Act No. 10863, or the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, the BOC said.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1974501/tons-of-suspected-smuggled-agriculture-products-seized-in-navotas>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# **PBBM: Sign the “Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act” asap**

By: [Jake J. Maderazo](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 05:00 AM August 20, 2024

Agricultural smugglers are very active again.

Over 300 tons of smuggled vegetables were seized by the Department of Agriculture in cold storage facilities in Navotas city. The first raid confiscated 132 tons of white onions estimated at P21.2M while the second netted almost 90 tons of smuggled carrots worth P13.4M. The operation also seized 360 kilos of tomatoes, 10 kilos of enoki mushrooms and 92.25 tons of imported white onions in a container van.

In a statement, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said the order of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is clear: “Go after these smugglers without let up,”. He also ordered the

Bureau of Plant Industry to suspend import permits of these vegetables.

Earlier in June, Laurel revealed four agricultural companies , two of which are in fishery products, one in sugar and one in rice , will be blacklisted by his department for involvement in smuggling activities. Up to this point, he has not divulged the names of these companies.

Laurel also admitted some companies attempted to bribe him just so he would allow their smuggled goods to enter the country. “ They bribed me initially at P200,000 per container, then they increased it to P1 million per container, but we burned all of them” . (Sinuhulan ako ng initially P200,000 per container, umakyat ng P1 million per container, sinunog namin lahat”) “You will see in the next few months, marami akong iba-blacklist na kumpanya, mga smugglers, kahit kaibigan ko iba-blacklist ko,” Laurel said. (I will blacklist several companies , and smugglers, and even if they are my friends, I will do so).

I remember in January last year, the House of Representatives identified alleged big time agricultural smugglers. DA secretary Laurel was appointed only came in November 3 last year and surely, he was unaware of these revelations. The ten names tagged by Sultan Kudarat 2<sup>nd</sup> district Rep. Horacio Suansing in a congressional hearing, are allegedly involved in large-scale agricultural smuggling in different points of entry in the country. They are Michael Ma, Lujene Ang, Andrew Chang, Beverly Peres, a certain “Aaron”, Manuel Tan, Leah Cruz, Jun Diamante, Lucio Lim, and Gerry Teves. Suansing also wants to investigate the alleged “consignees” of these people.

These 10 personalities were slated to appear in a subsequent Jan. 30 hearing, but it was canceled at the last minute. Investigation of the smugglers were then transferred from the Committee on Ways and means to the House committee on Agriculture and Food.

Four months later, Marikina Rep. Stella Luz A. Quimbo announced that the House Committee on Agriculture and Food will recommend the filing of charges against those linked to the agricultural smuggling and price fixing operations. She pointed to a group of companies involved in the whole onion supply chain and price manipulation that hit up to P700 per kilo in markets last year.

“The documents are saying that “The Philippine Vegetable Importers, Exporters and Vendors Association (PhilVIEVA Corp.) is an umbrella entity that covers the entire onion industry from farming (Leah Cruz), trading, (Yom Trading, La Reina), cold storage (Tian Long), and trucking (Golden Shine).” This group allegedly targets local farmers and manipulates prices using “cold storage facilities” as bargaining leverage. This pressures local farmers to sell at P12/kilo close to the landed cost of imported onions at P14/kilo. Eventually, this group controls both local and imported supply, Quimbo said.

Between May last year and the assumption of Laurel in the DA, all we saw were publicity stunts of raids and similar events, mainly because the present law (RA 10845) remains weak. Senator Cynthia A. Villar called this anti-smuggling law a “failure”. Bureau of Customs however announced in September 2023, that NCR branch 24 found Divina Bisco Aguilar, proprietor of Real Mart guilty of misdeclaration of carrots but under the Customs Modernization and Tariff act.(not RA 10845) She was sentenced to a prison term of three years to four years.

Rosendo O. So, chairman of the agricultural sector group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG), said law enforcement agencies themselves could be accomplices of smugglers.

However, there is a huge positive development and this happened only last Tuesday, when the Senate ratified the Committee Report on the proposed Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage act.

This bill makes agricultural smuggling in the amount exceeding P3M a “non-bailable offense” punishable by life imprisonment. If government officers are

involved, they face imprisonment of not more than 12 years with perpetual disqualification to hold public office

House Committee on Agriculture and Food Chairman Mark Enverga said the upcoming law will enhance agricultural productivity and shield farmers and fishers from the detrimental activities of smugglers, hoarders, and profiteers. “A direct response to Marcos’ call to action during his 2023 SONA where he highlighted the detrimental impact of smugglers and hoarders on agricultural prices and vowed to eliminate such practices”, he said.

The proposed bill is now awaiting the signature of the President, who earlier declared this as a priority in the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) .

If this signed into law and implemented, then we can see jail time for these ultra-rich agricultural smugglers , that is if they continue their old ways. Since time immemorial, they have manipulated the lives of our local farmers and dictated market and grocery prices of us, consumers. We have suffered long enough from these people who use their influence over law enforcement, and then corrupted numerous government functionaries at the Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Customs to look the other way.

Indeed, with this upcoming law, their days are already numbered.

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/176164/pbbm-sign-the-anti-agricultural-economic-sabotage-act-asap>

## BUSINESS WORLD:

# Movement of healthy hogs being planned for ASF ‘red zones’

August 19, 2024 | 8:57 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/ MICHAEL VARCAS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Monday that it is seeking to allow the transport of healthy pigs within African Swine Fever (ASF) “red zones,” where the disease is known to be active, in order to keep the market supplied.

“The government will ease (movement restrictions), but we have to make sure only live and healthy pigs are transported, not the infected ones, to avoid the spread of ASF,” Agriculture Undersecretary for Policy and Planning Asis G. Perez said in a statement.

The DA has met with industry representatives and local government officials to ensure the health of the hog being moved, he said.

“It’s important that we ensure infected animals stay in the red zone,” he added.

Mr. Perez said the easing of movement restrictions on non-infected pigs will ensure the market is adequately supplied and allow hog raisers to continue earning.

New ASF cases have clustered around Batangas, prompting the declaration of a state of calamity.

The DA has procured 10,000 doses of the AVAC ASF Live Vaccine from Vietnam for emergency inoculation of non-infected Batangas hogs. The inoculation is expected this week.

About P50 million has been earmarked for the indemnification of farmers whose hogs will need to be culled.

Additionally, Undersecretary for livestock Deogracias Victor B. Savellano said that the DA has raised the indemnification rate to P4,000 for piglets, P8,000 for medium-sized hogs, and P12,000 for sows and large hogs.

The maximum indemnification was previously P5,000 per animal.

“The higher indemnification is meant to encourage pig farmers to surrender their animals instead of selling them to traders who eventually transport the infected swine to other areas for slaughter,” Mr. Savellano said.

There are 32 barangays in seven Batangas cities or municipalities with active cases of ASF, according to the Bureau of Animal Industry. The seven are Lipa City, Calatagan, Lian, Lobo, Rosario, San Juan, and Talisay.

The DA last week placed checkpoints along Commonwealth and Mindanao Avenues in Quezon City; EDSA Balintawak; Marulas and Malanday, Valenzuela City; STAR Tollway in Sto. Tomas, Batangas; Calamba, Laguna; and Alfonso, Cavite to stop the movement of infected hogs.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary for Poultry and Swine Constance J. Palabrica said other vaccine manufacturers from the US, South Korea and Vietnam are also applying with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for approval.

The FDA has approved a controlled rollout of the ASF vaccine from Vietnam, concentrating on red zones and so-called pink zones, or those areas adjacent to zones with active infections. — Adrian H. Halili

[https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/08/19/614972/movement-of-healthy-hogs-being-planned-for-asf-red-zones/#google\\_vignette](https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/08/19/614972/movement-of-healthy-hogs-being-planned-for-asf-red-zones/#google_vignette)



## BUSINESS WORLD:

# Rice imports hit 2.57 MMT as of Aug. 8

August 19, 2024 | 8:54 pm



BW FILE PHOTO

PHILIPPINE rice imports totaled 2.57 million metric tons (MMT) as of Aug. 8, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry.

The bureau said inbound shipments for Aug. 1 to 8 reached 61,460 MT.

Vietnam accounted for 75.88% of all shipments to the Philippines, or 1.95 MMT, in the year to date.

Last week the US Department of Agriculture lowered the Philippines' rice import forecast to 4.6 MMT this year due to weaker-than-expected purchases of rice from Vietnam.

"Importers are hesitating to raise orders because of the lawsuit against lower tariffs," Roehlano M. Briones, a senior research fellow with the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, said via Viber.

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

Farmers' groups have sought to stop the lowering of the rice tariff, citing the threat to domestic growers.

"The reduction of tariffs to 15% should lead to even more imports. And then there is the reduction of output in the first semester," Federation of Free Farmers National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said via Viber.

In the first half, palay (unmilled rice) production dropped 5.5% to 8.53 MMT, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. This was the lowest first half production total since the 8.39 MMT posted in 2020.



Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr., said that the Department of Agriculture is projecting rice imports of 4 MMT in 2024.

The bureau added that Thailand supplied 360,444 MT during the period, or 14% of the total, followed by Pakistan with 154,523 MT, or 6.3%.

Rounding out the top five were Myanmar and India which shipped 66,640 MT and 21,676 MT of rice, respectively. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/08/19/614968/rice-imports-hit-2-57-mmt-as-of-aug-8/>

# *Solon cites DA plan to modify Masagana Rice*

By [Maricel Cruz](#)

August 19, 2024, 10:50 pm

A SENIOR congressman has cited a Department of Agriculture's (DA) plan to recalibrate the Masagana Rice Industry Development Program (MRIDP) to further boost palay harvests.

This as Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Raymund Villafuerte proposed to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. to consider a game-changing reform that will let the government sell the staple at P20 per kilo to poor families and at P30 to all other consumers.

“The DA's ‘recalibration’ plan for its MRIDP to boost palay yields and eventually achieve our rice sufficiency goal is a welcome development, and I hope that in pursuit of this planned overhaul, Secretary Kiko [Tiu Laurel] considers a game-changing subsidy-cum-procurement program that will enable farmers to produce five million metric tons or five billion kilos, leading to a drastic drop in the per-kilo retail price of rice to just P20 to P30,” Villafuerte said.

Under Villafuerte's proposal, which he initially raised last year, the government will allocate P40 billion in subsidies for farmers tilling a combined one million hectares in provinces that are the country's 10 biggest palay producers, with the goal of yielding a post-milling total of three billion kilos, which the government will then buy from the subsidized farmers at P9 per kilo.

Every farmer-beneficiary will get a subsidy of P40,000 per hectare to enable them to produce the targeted yield of five metric tons (MT) or 5,000 kilos per hectare or three MT or 3,000 kilos per hectare after milling.

The conversion rate of palay to rice after milling is 60 percent.

With this proposed subsidy and procurement setup, Villafuerte said the estimated total yield of three million MT will allow the government to sell 1.5 billion kilos of rice at P20 a kilo to poor and low-income families and another 1.5 billion kilos at P30 to the rest of the consumers.

Villafuerte noted that with the government spending about P40 billion in yearly subsidies on the rice subsector, “the DA could consider using this amount instead for a

new subsidy-cum-procurement program under the MRIDP for small farmers tilling an initial total land area of one million hectares in the ‘Top 10’ palay producers, at a financial aid of P40,000 per hectare for every target farmer-beneficiary.”

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314486372/solon-cites-da-plan-to-modify-masagana-rice.html>

# *P35-m smuggled agri items seized in Navotas*

By Joel E. Zurbano

August 19, 2024, 10:30 pm

THE Bureau of Customs (BOC) on Monday announced the seizure of smuggled agricultural products during a raid in two storage facilities in Dagat-Dagatan, Navotas City.

A team from the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (CIIS), the Department of Agriculture (DA), and the Navotas Police Station found inside the establishments agricultural and food products including onions, carrots, tomatoes, enoki mushrooms, Chinese noodles, and Chinese kimchi.

The goods were allegedly brought into the country without payment of duties and taxes.

One storage unit contained 132.75 tons of white onions valued at P21.2 million, while the other held 89.89 tons of imported carrots worth P13.48 million. Additionally, 360 kilos of tomatoes, 10 kilos of enoki mushrooms, and 92.25 tons of imported white onions were found in a 40-foot container van.



CIIS director Verne Enciso said the warehousemen refused to receive their raid permit prompting them to forcibly open the doors to the storage facilities and containers.

The operation was conducted in coordination with the city's Business Permit and Licensing Office, the Special Weapons and Tactics teams, and barangay officials.

Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio emphasized the commitment to uphold trade regulations and safeguard the integrity of the agricultural sector against illicit activities.

“This successful operation is a testament to our relentless effort to crack down on the smuggling of agricultural products,” said Rubio.

“We are resolute in our mission to protect our local farmers and industries from unfair competition and ensure that those who violate our laws are held accountable. This is just one of many steps we are taking to intensify our crackdown on smuggling activities,” he added.

Customs Intelligence chief Juvymax Uy, whose team received and verified the information about the facilities, said coordination with relevant agencies “ensures the safety of our markets and consumers.”

*Editor's Note: This is an updated article. Originally posted with the headline Smuggled agricultural goods seized in Navotas*

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314486020/p35-m-smuggled-agri-items-seized-in-navotas.html>

# *DA to meet Western Visayas LGUs on ASF*

By Manila Standard

August 19, 2024, 10:10 pm

The Department of Agriculture (DA) in Western Visayas is set to convene local government unit (LGU) leaders across the region to assess the impact of African Swine Fever (ASF) on hog farmers. The meeting aims to gather reports from affected farmers to determine the number of vaccines needed to prevent another outbreak in the region.

Dr. Jonic Natividad, Chief of the DA Western Visayas Regulatory Division, revealed that the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) is finalizing guidelines for the vaccine roll-out. “In Western Visayas, we will convene with local government units to assess how many vaccines are needed. This will be based on reports from both LGUs and potential partners. As of now, there is no exact number,” Natividad stated.

Natividad further emphasized the importance of the vaccines in preventing the ASF virus from spreading in Western Visayas. The guidelines will specify where the vaccines will be available, who will be eligible to receive them, and who will be prioritized.

Natividad clarified that the available vaccines are limited, and DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. has requested the initial 10,000 doses to be allocated to Batangas to contain a recent ASF outbreak among pigs in the area.

Seventy-seven LGUs in Western Visayas have reported ASF cases, according to BAI. The DA’s Sentinel Program involves distributing piglets for a 40-day trial to see if they can survive without contracting the virus. If they survive, they will be returned to the farmers. However, if the piglets die and are diagnosed with ASF, the farmers must conduct cleaning and disinfection.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/lgu/314486349/da-to-meet-western-visayas-lgus-on-asf.html>

# *TESDA bats for more farm schools for food security*

By [Manila Standard](#)

August 19, 2024, 7:05 pm

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) has encouraged private farm owners to collaborate with the establishment of farm schools in every municipality all over the country.

TESDA Deputy Director General for Special Concerns Felizardo Colambo said the arrangement would introduce farmers to emerging technologies and upgrade the skills of household members in agricultural production and entrepreneurship.

Farmers, he said, would learn best practices and help establish their community as a social enterprise. The farm schools will also engage everyone in harnessing the potentials of local natural resources that eventually leads to attaining food security.

Speaking at the World Cafè of Opportunities (WCO) in Dasmariñas City, Cavite, Colambo also urged attendees in the skills fair to consider pursuing self-employment by enrolling in any of the agriculture-related and entrepreneurial courses conducted by TESDA.

Through education and training, farmers will learn scientific methods in organic farming, integrate modern technology and enhance their skills in marketing their products.

WCO is a Job Linking & Networking Services (JoLINS) Platform, a segment of TESDA's 30th anniversary celebration.

Dasmariñas City Mayor Jenny Barzaga and representatives of Cavite Governor Jonvic Remulla, industry leaders and tecvoc institutions attended the event.

TESDA-accredited schools and private technical and vocational institutions regularly conduct training on agricultural crop production, aquaculture, horticulture, organic agriculture production, rice machinery operations and animal production.

The cost of training is covered by TESDA's Training for Work Scholarship Program (TWSP). All graduates earn a National Certificate level II.

The government allocates P1 billion every year from the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) as provided by RA 11203 for farmers training being conducted by TESDA to ensure food security and make the agricultural sector viable, efficient and globally competitive.

As TESDA collaborates with the Department of Education in the embedment of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in senior high school, focus must be made in skilling of students in the emerging technologies and the agri-fishery sector by enhancing specific learning areas to complement rural farm schools in every province.

A month after his appointment to TESDA, Colambo already benchmarked three successful and large farm schools namely, the Villacoziolo Compact Organic Farm in Jaro Leyte; Julimon's Nature Farm in Initao, Misamis Oriental; and Kaluppâ Foundation in Santa Cruz, Marinduque.

The schools are doing great jobs in helping farmers and in upskilling those who intend to work in local industries and those who prefer overseas employment.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/spotlight/environmental-and-sustainability/314486184/tesda-bats-for-more-farm-schools-for-food-security.html>



# *Japan helping to rehabilitate PH ecosystem*

By DA News

August 19, 2024, 7:00 pm

Japan is extending its assistance to the Philippines to develop a sustainable agriculture in the face of climate change and ecosystem degradation.

The Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM) recently signed an agreement with the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS) to develop and promote agricultural technologies to enhance production and improve natural resource management in the tropics.

The DA and the Japanese research agency agreed to develop approaches and technologies for carbon storage in farmland soils in the Philippines as a means to promote soil health and fertility and enhance sustainability and resilience in agriculture.

They also committed to study environmental conservation technologies for tropical islands through the “Yama-Sato-Umi” (“Mountain-Village-Sea”) perspective, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of land, sea and society.

The collaboration aims to seek ways to prevent soil erosion in hilly agricultural lands and reduce fertilizer inputs, and gather and analyze scientific evidence that can contribute to the conservation of mangrove ecosystems. It will also develop a basin model for the evaluation of environmental conservation effects on river water quality and quantity.

“These projects are supported and are very much in line with the National Soil Health Program, which is one of the top priority agenda of the DA to contribute towards sustainable management of soil and water resources as well as the productivity of the agriculture sector,” says BSWM Director Gina Nilo.

She added that as the national focal agency of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation (UNCCD), the bureau welcomes its collaboration with JIRCAS, especially since the agriculture sector is being riddled with the impacts of climate change and ecosystem degradation.

“Weather extremes due to climate change and environmental problems such as soil and nutrient runoff from farmlands and ecosystem degradation are of urgent concern

in the country—affecting resources, agricultural productivity, and livelihood of our farmers,” she said.

“Since the agriculture sector is one of the major contributors to climate change through the emission of greenhouse gasses, there is a need to develop adaptation and mitigation technologies,” she added. DA News

The BSWM is the country’s sole national soil resource agency whose services include soil conservation and sustainable agricultural land management advocacy, soil resources assessment and mapping, agricultural water resources management, analytical services, and soil and water resources research and development.

JIRCAS president Koyama Osamu welcomed the agreement between the Philippines and Japan, saying it revitalized the 36 years of cooperation between the two countries, which led to the establishment of the Soil Research and Development Center Project in 1988.

“It is my sincere hope that the effort through our collaborative research projects will bring greater impacts to the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries and tropical islands and achieve sustainable food systems in the region,” Koyama said. DA News

<https://www.manilastandard.net/spotlight/environmental-and-sustainability/314486189/japan-helping-to-rehabilitate-ph-ecosystem.html>

## *Customs seizes 300 tons of agri products*

By William B. Depasupil

August 20, 2024

MORE than 300 tons of assorted agricultural products were seized by Bureau of Customs (BoC) authorities in a raid on two cold storage facilities in Navotas City.

Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio said on Monday that the operation was a concerted effort between Customs and the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Acting on intelligence information received from a confidential informant, BoC and DA personnel launched a surveillance operation targeting a compound suspected of harboring smuggled agricultural products.



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. leads the inspection of smuggled agricultural products in Barangay Bangkulasi in Navotas City on Monday, August 19, 2024. PHOTOS BY RENE H. DILAN

Found inside the cold storage facilities were a variety of agricultural products with an estimated value of P50 million.

Authorities found significant quantities of onions, carrots, tomatoes, enoki mushrooms, Chinese noodles and Chinese kimchi allegedly being stored without proper payment of duties and taxes to the government.

Customs agents immediately sealed the warehouse.

"This successful operation is a testament to our relentless effort to crack down on the smuggling of agricultural products," Rubio said.

Of the two cold storage facilities, one contained 132.75 tons of white onions, valued at P21.2 million, while the other had 89.89 tons of imported carrots, worth at least P13.48 million.

Also seized were 360 kilos of tomatoes, 10 kilos of mushrooms and 92.25 tons of imported white onions in a 40-foot container van.

Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service Director Verne Enciso said that the warehouse owners, representatives, lessees, lessors, or occupants refused to receive the Letter of Authority (LOA) issued by the commissioner.



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. leads the inspection of smuggled agricultural products in Barangay Bangkulasi in Navotas City on Monday, August 19, 2024. PHOTOS BY RENE H. DILAN

"Because the warehouse representatives refused to acknowledge the LOA, the [authorities] resorted to forcing open the inner gate door

of the cold storage and the doors of the container [van]," the official said.

Intelligence Group Deputy Commissioner Juvymax Uy, whose team received and verified the information, lauded the operation and underscored the importance of a whole-of-government approach to curbing smuggling.

"Coordinating with relevant agencies ensures the safety of our markets and consumers. These operations are crucial in driving the message to these organizations that our intention is to pulverize them to the ground," he said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/20/news/national/customs-seizes-300-tons-of-agri-products/1965016>

# *Cacao industry to get boost*

By Leander C. Domingo

August 20, 2024

A DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry (DTI) project aims to boost the cacao industry in Nueva Vizcaya.

DTI Region 2 Director Ma. Sofia Narag said Project RD Sofie, in partnership with Nueva Vizcaya Cacao Growers Association Inc. (NVCGAI), would bring many "Cacao-Loka" opportunities to the province's cacao industry.

RD Sofie means Roving for the Development and Strengthening of Opportunities for Flourishing Industries and Enterprises of Nueva Vizcaya.

Narag said she met in an immersion visit with the members of the NVCGAI on August 7, in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, to deepen her understanding of the province's unique landscape.

She said her visit sought to foster relationships with key officials and engage directly with micro, small and medium enterprises or MSMEs.

Narag and her team also visited the farm and the Cacao Processing Facility Upgrading Shared Service Facility (SSF) Project.

"We sat with the cacao processors and farmers led by association president Rusty Cabacungan to gather more information on their concerns and upcoming activities," she said.

"Our discussion centered around the group's need for quality seedlings and farm inputs, as well as their plans to conduct massive cacao planting activities, establish their nursery, and visit more barangays to advocate for the bright prospect of the industry," Narag added.

The DTI Team and the NVCGAI also explored expanding the SSF Project to include a drying facility and packaging equipment for their Nutrichamp (Champorado) product to "enhance product quality and marketability."

Narag assured the group that she would "communicate these needs with partner agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture, to secure further interventions."

She said the DTI and the NVCGAI collaboration is expected to provide opportunities for capacity-building sessions and training on cacao production, "enabling members to become mentors and share their knowledge with others."

Meanwhile, DTI Provincial Director Michael Paggabao said the DTI Team and the NVCGAI meeting concluded with a symbolic cacao planting activity.

"This represents a pivotal step toward energizing and advancing the province's cacao industry, ensuring that the 'Hataw Cacao' momentum for development continues to build and flourish," Paggabao said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/20/regions/cacao-industry-to-get-boost/1965063>



# *Iloilo hog farms slowly recovering from African swine fever*

By Rjay Zuriaga Castor

August 20, 2024

**ILOILO CITY** — The hog industry in Iloilo province is gradually recovering from the impact of the African swine fever (ASF), with swine sufficiency levels reaching 70 percent.

The province recorded a 16.59 percent increase in swine inventory, from 72,320 hogs in February 2024 to 84,323 in August.

"For ASF, we are still the same because our ban is still there, but right now, we are already in the recovery stage," said Iloilo Gov. Arthur Defensor Jr.

Defensor attributed the current increase in swine sufficiency to backyard hog raisers.

"We are executing protocols right now, but as we go along, we know that some of our backyard industries have already started to raise hogs, and that is what is sustaining us right now," he said.

As of August, data from the Provincial Veterinary Office (PVO) showed that the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Industry upgraded 17 towns from red zone to pink zone status for ASF, while 11 towns remained in the red or infected zone.

"Our pink zone is recovering; that is why we have downloaded money for the sentinel program," Defensor said.

The PVO already released P4.3 million to six towns in pink zone status, benefiting 357 hog raisers.



The towns that had already received the funds for the trial run to assess the presence of ASF in their areas include Barotac Viejo, New Lucena, Dingle, Banate, Sta. Barbara and San Miguel.

**The provincial government has allocated a P10.032 million budget for the sentinelling program.**

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/20/regions/iloilo-hog-farms-slowly-recovering-from-african-swine-fever/1965062>

# *DA to ease regulations on hog transport*

By Janine Alexis Miguel

August 20, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) announced plans to relax regulations on transporting hogs from areas with active cases of African swine fever (ASF) to other areas to ensure a stable pork supply throughout the country.

In a series of consultations concluded last Saturday, the department said that refined protocols will govern the movement of healthy pigs from Red Zones amid a resurgence of ASF, particularly in Batangas.

"The government will ease regulation, but we have to make sure only live and healthy pigs are transported, not the infected ones, to avoid the spread of ASF. That's why it's important that we ensure infected animals stay in red zones," DA Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and Regulation Asis Perez said on Monday.

Undersecretary for Livestock Deogracias Victor Savellano and Assistant Secretary for Poultry and Swine Dante Palabrica also met with industry stakeholders and agriculturists from Calabarzon to discuss ways to transport healthy pigs.

Also discussed were measures on how to prevent the spread of ASF in the region, which has had a devastating impact on swine production since 2019.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/20/business/top-business/da-to-ease-regulations-on-hog-transport/1965037>

## *DA eases transport protocol on hogs*

By Jed Macapagal

August 20, 2024



Indemnification for hog raisers has been raised from a maximum P5,000 per pig to P4,000 for piglets, P8,000 for medium-sized hogs and P12,000 for sows and bigger hogs. (PNA file photo)

The Department of Agriculture (DA) proposes to allow the movement of healthy pigs from Red Zones or areas with active cases of African swine fever (ASF) to other zones to ensure stability of pork supply and to sustain the livelihood of hog raisers.

Asis Perez, DA undersecretary for policy, planning and regulation, said the proposed relaxed guidelines came after a series of consultations with local government officials, agriculturists and industry groups in Calabarzon over the weekend following a resurgence of ASF, particularly in Batangas.

“The government will ease regulation but we have to make sure only live and healthy pigs are transported, not the infected ones, to avoid the spread of ASF. It’s important that we ensure infected animals stay in Red Zones,” Perez said, in a statement.

DA also approved a higher rate for indemnification for ASF-infected pigs to encourage farmers to surrender their animals instead of selling them to unscrupulous traders who eventually transport the infected swine to other areas for slaughtering.

Deogracias Victor Savellano, DA undersecretary for livestock, said indemnification has been raised to P4,000 for piglets, P8,000 for medium-sized hogs and P12,000 for sows and bigger hogs.

Previously, the maximum indemnification was P5,000 per pig.

Savellano said P50 million has been set aside as initial budget for indemnification.

Dante Palabrica, DA assistant secretary for poultry and swine, said 10,000 doses of ASF vaccines arrived from Vietnam yesterday for the emergency inoculation of healthy growers in Red Zones as a response to the resurgence of ASF.

The vaccines are being prepared for possible inoculation in Batangas this week. Palabrica said the vaccination is part of a wider controlled testing of the ASF vaccine from Vietnam, adding other vaccine manufacturers from the US, South Korea and Vietnam have applied with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to be part of the controlled testing to be conducted by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI).

The DA said these applicants have vaccines that could be injected to breeders and growers.

Palabrica also assured FDA has set strict requirements for the controlled testing to ensure vaccine efficiency, including genome sequencing of the virus to ensure that inoculation will not result in mutation.

Based on latest data from BAI, as of August 8, 2024, active cases of ASF in the country are contained in 11 regions, 22 provinces, 64 municipalities and 251 barangays.

[https://malaya.com.ph/news\\_business/da-eases-transport-protocol-on-hogs/](https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/da-eases-transport-protocol-on-hogs/)

# *Customs, DA seize 200 tons of smuggled farm products*

Reine Juvierre S. Alberto  
August 19, 2024



In file photo: Imported carrots are on display at the Pasay Public Market. The Department of Agriculture has urged consumers to be meticulous when buying vegetables from the market, as undocumented shipments of agricultural produce are reportedly being sold in the country.

THE Bureau of Customs (BOC) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) seized 200 tons of smuggled agricultural products from China with an estimated value of P35 million.

In a statement on Monday, the BOC said the smuggled goods were discovered in two cold storage units inside a warehouse in Dagat-dagatan, Navotas City, on August 15.

The first cold storage unit contained 132.75 tons of white onions worth P21.2 million, while the other stored 89.89 tons of imported carrots valued at P13.48 million.



The operation also discovered 360 kilos of tomatoes, 10 kilos of enoki mushrooms and 92.25 tons of imported white onions concealed in a 40-foot container van.

“These goods were allegedly stored without proper payment of duties and taxes owed to the government,” the BOC said.

Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (CIIS) Director Verne Enciso said the warehouse owners and representatives or occupants refused to receive the Letter of Authority (LOA) issued by the commissioner, prompting the enforcers to forcibly open the cold storage.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/19/customs-da-seize-200-tons-of-smuggled-farm-products/>

## ***FFF to solons, Tesda: Probe ‘sale’ of training grants***

Ada Pelonia  
August 20, 2024

THE Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) called on Congress and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda) to probe the alleged “selling” of training grants for farmers.

The FFF claimed that according to field reports, some Tesda provincial personnel demand up to 30 percent in “under the table” advances from farm-school owners or managers in return for the approval and release of the agency’s P10,000 to P12,000-grant for each farmer-scholar.

“In other cases, these payments are allegedly solicited by agents of elected politicians in cahoots with unscrupulous agency personnel,” the FFF said in a statement.

The farmers group said Tesda receives an earmarked allocation of P700 million yearly to train rice farmers in improved farming technologies under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) created by Republic Act No. 11203, also known as the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL).

“The agency disburses this amount through financial grants to accredited farm schools and their farmer scholars,” the FFF said.

It said Tesda gets a separate fund for organic agriculture, technical-vocational education and training, and other agriculture-related programs under its regular budgetary appropriations (P15.2 billion in 2024 and P13.7 billion in 2023) from Congress.

The group added that Republic Act No. 11524 or the Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund Act of 2022 further allocates a yearly budget (P400 million yearly in 2024 and in 2023) to Tesda for the training of coconut farmers.



“Since Congress is currently considering amendments to the RCEF, the FFF cited the urgent need for a thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of Tesda’s use of its training funds,” the group said.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier said that the life of RCEF must be extended as the government needs more time to deliver the assistance that rice farmers need to become competitive. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/05/rcef-extension-crucial-to-achieving-food-security-da/>)

“The extension of the RCEF [Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund] is very important. We need additional years to provide adequate support through mechanization and increased seed production,” Laurel said during the Senate Committee on Agricultural and Fisheries Modernization hearing earlier this month.

He proposed the use of RCEF for other projects, such as solar irrigation, water impounding, soil testing, and pest control.

The agriculture chief said extending RTL and RCEF is “crucial” for improving rice farmers’ livelihoods. The RCEF is set to expire in early 2025.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/20/fff-to-solons-tesda-probe-sale-of-training-grants/>

# Pagbabakuna ng baboy vs ASF sa Batangas 'di muna tuloy – DA

[Angie dela Cruz](#)

August 20, 2024 | 12:00am



Ayon kay DA Spokesman Arnel De Mesa, orientation at pagkuha muna ng blood samples ang mangyayari ngayong Martes, August 20.

Cesar Ramirez

MANILA, Philippines — Kinumpirma ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na hindi muna matutuloy ang aktuwal na pagbabakuna kontra African Swine Fever (ASF) sa mga baboy sa Batangas kahit dumating na ang mga bakuna sa bansa.

Ayon kay DA Spokesman Arnel De Mesa, orientation at pagkuha muna ng blood samples ang mangyayari ngayong Martes, August 20.

Anyang, matatagalan ang pagkuha ng resulta sa blood testing ng 20 hanggang 48 oras para malaman kung positibo o hindi ang mga baboy sa ASF kaya wala munang mangyayaring aktuwal na pagbabakuna sa mga baboy.

Sinabi ni De Mesa na mahalaga na matiyak na walang ASF ang mga mababakunahan na baboy upang makita ang efficiency ng bakuna.

laanunsyo na lamang anya ng DA kung kailan isasagawa ang aktuwal na pagbabakuna ng DA sa mga baboy.

Sinabi ni de Mesa na nasa bansa na ang 10 libong dosage ng bakuna kontra ASF.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/probinsiya/2024/08/20/2379101/pagbabakuna-ng-baboy-vs-asf-sa-batangas-di-muna-tuloy-da>

**REMATE:**

## **2 trak ng baboy na may hinihinalang ASF naharang sa QC**

August 19, 2024 09:33



MANILA, Philippines – Pinahinto ng Department of Agriculture – Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) ang dalawang trak na may dalang mga baboy na hinihinalang infected ng African Swine Fever (ASF) sa labas ng Metro Manila.

Naharang ng mga awtoridad ang isang trak na may lulan ng 38 baboy sa Commonwealth Avenue sa Quezon City habang pinahinto ng isa pang checkpoint ang isa pang trak na may kargang 11 pang baboy sa Malanday, Venezuela City.

Sa mga inspeksyon, ang isa sa mga trak ay napag-alamang gumagamit ng recycled local shipping permit habang ang isa pang trak ay nagdadala ng mga baboy na nagpapakita ng sintomas ng ASF.

Sinabi ng mga awtoridad na sumasailalim sa ASF testing ang mga baboy.

Sinabi ni Agriculture Assistant Secretary for Swine and Poultry Dante Palabrica na nagdagdag ang ahensya ng mas maraming checkpoints sa hilaga at timog na bahagi ng Metro Manila upang maiwasan ang pagpasok ng ASF-infected hogs sa National Capital Region.

Dagdag pa niya, **nagtutulungan ang local government units, DA-BAI, at National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS)** para matiyak na ligtas at malinis ang karneng ibinebenta sa palengke. ***RNT***

<https://remate.ph/2-trak-ng-baboy-na-may-hinihinalang-asf-naharang-sa-qc/>



**REMATE:**

## Sirit-presyo sa itlog

August 19, 2024 12:16

Tumaaas ng 20 pesos kada tray ng itlog sa Paco market sa Maynila. Ito bunsod ng mataas na presyo ng patuka sa mga manok. ***Crismon Heramis***



<https://remate.ph/sirit-presyo-sa-itlog/>

**ABANTE:**

# Milyon-milyong halaga ng sibuyas, carrots nasabat sa Navotas ng BOC at DA

- [Abante News](#)
- [August 19, 2024](#)



Milyun-milyong halaga ng iba't ibang uri ng mga hinihinalang puslit na agricultural products ang nakumpiska ng mga tauhan ng Bureau of Customs (BOC) at Department of Agriculture (DA), sa isinagawang anti-smuggling operation sa Dagat-dagatan, Navotas City, nabatid kahapon.

Ang naturang joint operation na isinagawa bilang bahagi nang patuloy na pagsusumikap ng pamahalaan na labanan ang ilegal na bentahan ng smuggled goods at sa layuning protektahan ang lokal na industriya ng agrikultura sa bansa, ay nagpapakita sa commitment ng BOC at ng DA na higit pang palakasin ang regulasyon ng kalakalan at bantayan ang integridad ng agricultural sector laban sa illicit activities.



Nauna rito, nakatanggap ang BOC ng intelligence information mula sa isang confidential informant kaugnay sa isang compound na hinihinalang nagtatago ng smuggled agricultural products kaya't sa tulong ng DA ay kaagad na naglunsad ng surveillance operation.

Noong Agosto 15, sa tulong ng Northern Police District – Navotas Police Station at local barangay officials, nag-inspeksiyon ang grupo sa lugar at nadiskubre doon ang dalawang cold storage units na naglalaman ng iba't ibang uri ng agricultural goods na galing sa China.

Nabatid na ang isa sa mga cold storage unit ay naglalaman ng 132.75 tonelada ng puting sibuyas, na nagkakahalaga ng P21.2 milyon, habang ang isa pa ay mayroon namang nakaimbak na 89.89 tonelada ng imported carrots, na nagkakahalaga ng P13.48 milyon. Nadiskubre rin ang 360 kilo ng kamatis, 10 kilo ng enoki mushrooms, at 92.25 tonelada ng imported white onions na nasa isang 40-foot container van.

Inimbak umano doon ang mga naturang goods nang hindi nagbabayad ng kaukulang duties at taxes sa pamahalaan kaya't kaagad na sinelyuhan ng BOC ang mga warehouse upang i-secure ang mga nakumpiskang items, sa tulong ng Business Permit and Licensing Office (BPLO) staff, SWAT teams, at barangay representatives.

“This successful operation is a testament to our relentless effort to crack down on the smuggling of agricultural products,” ayon kay BOC Commissioner Bienvenido Y. Rubio. “We are resolute in our mission to protect our local farmers and industries from unfair competition and ensure that those who violate our laws are held accountable. This is just one of many steps we are taking to intensify our crackdown on smuggling activities.”

Sinabi naman ni Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (CIIS) Director Verne Enciso na tumanggi ang warehouse owners, representatives, lessees, lessors, o occupants na tanggapin ang Letter of Authority (LOA) na inisyu ng commissioner. “Because the warehouse representatives refused to acknowledge the LOA, they resorted to forcing open the inner gate door of the cold storage and container doors,” aniya.

Pinuri naman ni Intelligence Group Deputy Commissioner Juvymax Uy ang operasyon at binigyang-diin ang kahalagahan ng isang whole-of-government approach upang sugpuin ang smuggling sa bansa. “Coordinating with relevant agencies ensures the safety of our markets and consumers. These operations are crucial in driving the message to these organizations that our intention is to pulverize them to the ground,” aniya.

Ang may-ari at mga kinatawan ng mga cold storage facilities ay maaaring maharap sa kasong paglabag sa Section 1400 (misdeclaration in goods declaration) at Sec. 117 (regulated importation) in relation to Section 1113 (property subject to seizure and forfeiture) ng Republic Act No. 10863, o mas kilala sa tawag na Customs Modernization and Tariff Act (CMTA).

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/08/19/milyon-milyong-halaga-ng-sibuyas-carrots-nasabat-sa-navotas-ng-boc-at-da/>