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MANILA BULLETIN:

Tahong chips are back: Cavite shellfish ban lifted after oil spill

BY [CARLA BAUTO DEÑA](#)

Aug 29, 2024 06:37 PM



File photo of mussels in Bacoor (Photo from Bacoor City Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs's Facebook page/MANILA BULLETIN)

CAVITE – Fisherfolk in the province’s coastal areas can now harvest and sell mussels, clams, and other seafood, following weeks of shellfish ban due to the oil spill from the sunken tanker MT Terra Nova off Limay, Bataan.

On Thursday, Aug. 29, Gov. Jonvic Remulla said the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has declared shellfish from Cavite safe to consume.

“Para sa kaalaman ng lahat, ayon kay Sec. Laurel ng Kagawaran ng Agrikultura, malaya na po manghuli at magtinda ng mga tahong at tulya mula sa Cavite (For everyone's information, according to Sec. Francisco Tiu Laurel of the Department of Agriculture, it is now permitted to catch and sell mussels and clams from Cavite),” Remulla posted on Facebook.

“Ito ay pagkatapos ng dalawang confirmatory test ng BFAR na ligtas na sa lason ang ating mga tahong. Mga bro, pwede na ulit pulutan ang tahong-chips-ahoy (This decision comes after two

confirmatory tests by BFAR, confirming that our mussels are now safe from toxins. So, bros, you can enjoy mussel chips as a bar snack once again)."

On Aug. 28, President Marcos extended cash assistance to Caviteño fisherfolk affected by the oil spill in a ceremonial turnover in Gen. Trias City.

During his speech, he announced that fisherfolk in Cavite coastal areas could return to fishing.

"Nasabihan ako ni Sec. Kiko Laurel ng DA na mula ngayon ay maaari nang mangisda, wala nang oil spill, pwede nang ituloy ang inyong hanap-buhay (Sec. Kiko Laurel of the Department of Agriculture informed me that starting today, you can go back to fishing, the oil spill has been cleared, and you can resume your livelihood)," the president said during his speech, streamed live through Facebook.



President Marcos extended cash assistance to oil spill-affected Caviteño fisherfolk in a turnover ceremony in Gen. Trias City on Aug. 28 (Noel Pabalate/MANILA BULLETIN)

The president also mentioned that authorities are investigating the sinking of the ships to hold those responsible accountable and to ensure that the affected citizens will receive appropriate compensation.

On Aug. 1, Remulla signed Executive Order No. 38—Series 2024, declaring a [no-catch and no-sell zone](#) for all shellfish in the coastal areas of Cavite due to the impact of the Bataan oil spill.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/29/tahong-chips-are-back-cavite-shellfish-ban-lifted-after-oil-spill>

MANILA BULLETIN:

‘All systems go’: DA to start ASF vaccination in Batangas on Aug. 30

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

Aug 29, 2024 05:16 PM



It’s all systems go for the inoculation of hogs against the African Swine Fever (ASF) in Batangas on Friday, August 30.

This was announced by Department of Agriculture (DA) spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa during a press briefing.

“All systems go tayo for the vaccination sa Lobo, Batangas. Iyong mga na-test nating baboy prior to vaccination ay negative [for ASF] and healthy so matutuloy ang bakuna natin bukas 9 a.m. (It’s all systems go for the vaccination in Lobo, Batangas. The hogs we tested prior to the vaccination were negative for ASF and healthy, so the vaccination will proceed tomorrow at 9 a.m.),” he said on Thursday, August 29.

De Mesa said they will prioritize vaccinating small-hold and backyard hog-raisers in Batangas.

One vial of the ASF vaccine from Vietnam can vaccinate 50 hogs, he added.

The DA has allocated 10,000 doses of ASF vaccine to Batangas and its neighboring areas.

“For Batangas 10,000 [doses] and other nearby areas. Itong initial 10,000 doses ay galing doon sa emergency procurement (This initial 10,000 is for Batangas and other nearby areas. The initial 10,000 doses is from the emergency procurement),” he said.

The DA spokesperson declined to provide the target number of hogs they are planning to vaccinate during the first day of the inoculation of the ASF vaccine.

Earlier, the agriculture department said they will focus on vaccinating hogs in areas classified as “red areas.” Areas identified as red zones are high risk or currently experiencing an outbreak of a specific agricultural disease, such as ASF.

According to the agency, the spread of ASF has intensified, with 32 provinces now reporting active cases and 458 barangays affected.

Such is a considerable increase from June, when the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) recorded just 12 affected provinces and 32 barangays.

The BAI has allotted P350 million for the procurement of ASF vaccines, De Mesa said.

During a town hall meeting in Occidental Mindoro in April, President Marcos said that the ASF vaccines would be obtained from Vietnam.

ASF, a highly contagious and deadly swine disease, has been devastating swine industries around the world since its resurgence in 2018.

In 2019, ASF resurfaced in the Philippines and has since spread across more than 3,800 barangays in 53 provinces by July 2022.

Due to ASF, local pork production in the Philippines fell by almost a fourth from June to October 2021 against the comparative period in 2020.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/29/all-systems-go-da-to-start-asf-vaccination-in-batangas-on-aug-30>

MANILA BULLETIN:

BOC stops P8 million undocumented Thai oranges

BY [XANDER DAVE CEBALLOS](#)

Aug 29, 2024 05:02 PM

The Bureau of Customs (BOC) intercepted a shipment of imported oranges from Thailand valued at P8.4 million after discovering that it lacked the required sanitary documents.

In collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, the BOC successfully prevented the entry of 3,200 cartons of fresh oranges.

The Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (CIIS) carried out the interception at the Manila International Container Port (MICP). The shipment was flagged due to the absence of the necessary import sanitary clearance from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

“Their prompt actions prevented the entry of subject oranges which are not only deemed unsafe for human consumption but endangers the country’s local ecology due to the absence of the required SPSIC which safeguards the nation’s border against possible entry of infested and/or contaminated agricultural products,” the Customs said in a statement.

Representatives from Customs Intelligence and Investigation Services (CISS), the Enforcement and Security Service, the Customs Anti-Illegal Drug Task Force, the X-ray Inspection Project, and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) were present during the 100 percent physical examination of the subject goods.

CIIS Director Verne Enciso said that the “derogatory information” the CIIS received from the BPI led them to the seizure of the shipment.

“This interception highlights the coordination and collaboration among and between key government agencies, and even the various units within the BOC. The information we received was immediately verified by our officers and with the help of agriculture experts, we were able to pin down the cargo,” he said.

The undocumented oranges were also subjected to K-9 sweeping by PDEA personnel, but the BOC noted there were no dangerous drugs were found in the shipment.

The confiscated oranges will be subjected to condemnation proceedings under DA Department Order No. 09, series of 2010, to ensure that said goods do not reach the local market.

The case records of the subject importation were also referred to the Bureau Action Team Against Smuggling for case build-up and eventual prosecution of personalities behind the halted unlawful importation of agricultural products.

Meanwhile, the BOC said it will continue collaborating with the DA to enhance efforts in securing the country's borders, ensuring that unlawfully imported and potentially harmful products will not proliferate our local markets.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/29/boc-stops-p8-million-undocumented-thai-oranges>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Laurel greenlights white onion importation

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

Aug 29, 2024 02:54 PM



The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Thursday, Aug. 29, confirmed the approval of importation of white onion to “ensure stable market prices and supply.”

In a statement, DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the import volume of white onion will be limited to 16,000 metric tons and its arrival will be spread over for the last four months of the year.

He said the first batch of the imported onions should start arriving within the next few days. “We will do this by batches, in limited quantity so as not to affect existing stocks of red onions as well. We will issue permits every two weeks,” Laurel stated.

He pointed out that the additional supply of white or yellow onion should arrive before the end of the year to prevent the importation from impacting local onion farmers’ output early next year.

The DA chief explained that unlike red onion, that is abundantly produced in the country, local production of white or yellow onion is limited. Laurel said the current supply of red onion is enough to last until March next year.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/29/laurel-greenlights-white-onion-importation>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Oil spill-affected Cavite fisherfolk get cash assistance from nat'l gov't

BY [CARLA BAUTO DEÑA](#)

Aug 29, 2024 11:32 AM



President Marcos extended cash assistance to oil spill-affected Caviteño fisherfolk in a turnover ceremony in Gen. Trias City on Aug. 28 (Noel Pabalate/MANILA BULLETIN)

CAVITE – President Marcos extended cash assistance to Caviteño fisherfolk affected by the oil spill off Limay, Bataan, on Wednesday, Aug. 28.

In a ceremonial turnover at General Trias Sports Park in General Trias City, Marcos addressed around 9,000 fisherfolk from Bacoor City, Cavite City, Kawit, Maragondon, Naic, Noveleta, Rosario, Tanza, and Ternate.

Attendees received a cash assistance of P6,500 each, intended to help them cope with the economic effects of the oil spill.



DILG Sec. Benhur Abalos Jr., DA Sec. Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., President Marcos, and Gov. Jonvic Remulla during the turnover ceremony of cash assistance for oil spill-affected Caviteño fisherfolk on Aug. 28 (Noel Pabalate/MANILA BULLETIN)

“Nasabihan ako ni Sec. Kiko Laurel ng DA na mula ngayon ay maaari nang mangisda, wala nang oil spill, pwede nang ituloy ang inyong hanap-buhay (Sec. Kiko Laurel of the Department of Agriculture informed me that starting today, you can go back to fishing, the oil spill has been cleared, and you can resume your livelihood),” the president said during his speech, streamed live through Facebook.

“Sa ngayon, iniimbestigahan na natin ang paglubog ng mga barko upang makalalap tayo ng sapat na impormasyon na mapanagot ang mga may sala ayon sa batas. Titiyakin din natin na makakatanggap ng karampatang kompensasyon ang mga naapektuhang mamamayan (At present, we are investigating the sinking of the ships to gather sufficient information to hold those responsible accountable according to the law. We will also ensure that the affected citizens receive appropriate compensation).”

Marcos also mentioned that the Philippine Coast Guard estimates that the oil-siphoning process from the sunken tanker will be completed within two weeks.



President Marcos extended cash assistance to oil spill-affected Caviteño fisherfolk in a turnover ceremony in Gen. Trias City on Aug. 28 (Noel Pabalate/MANILA BULLETIN)

The rest of the 25,000 fisherfolk from the province’s coastal communities who weren’t present in the turnover ceremony will receive the same cash assistance from the national government in the next distribution rounds, which the provincial government will facilitate.

Present during the ceremonial turnover were Department of the Interior and Local Government Sec. Benhur Abalos Jr., DA Sec. Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr., Sen. Francis Tolentino, Gov. Jonvic Remulla, and other local officials.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/29/oil-spill-affected-cavite-fisherfolk-get-cash-assistance-from-nat-l-gov-t>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Special Report: Tobacco farmers pin hopes on 60-year-old fund

Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas, Louise Maureen Simeon - The Philippine Star

August 30, 2024 | 12:00am



Tobacco farmers gather their harvest.

STAR / File

(Conclusion)

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has maintained that part of the Tobacco Fund may be tapped as a viable source for the government to fund its priority projects, particularly those that will help boost the agriculture sector and eventually contribute to economic growth.

However, Budget Undersecretary Wilford Wong said there is a need to amend the law first through a recommendation from the permanent committee composed of the Department of Finance, DBM and the Commission on Audit.

General provisions under the General Appropriations Act mandate the reversion of special funds to the general fund when they have remained dormant for an unreasonable length of time, among other reasons.

All income generated from the Tobacco Fund is transferred to the general fund in order to be made available for yearly appropriation by Congress.

Over the past years, Wong said that the DBM had received funding requests from agencies such as the National Tobacco Administration (NTA) and the Bureau of Internal Revenue for their tobacco fund entitlement. For instance, the NTA sought to implement its Sustainable Tobacco Enhancement Program (STEP), a five-year plan aimed at boosting productivity and increasing farmers' income.

In response, the DBM stated that the use of the Tobacco Fund still forms part of the total approved programmed expenditure of the government for a given year even though it has been automatically appropriated.

“For fiscal prudence, programmed automatic appropriations are valid for release, obligation and disbursement within the budget year only. All unexpended or undisbursed funds shall be reverted at the end of the fiscal year,” Wong said.

Fund releases will also undergo the usual budgeting process for inclusion in the total fiscal program and for the Bureau of the Treasury to properly include them in its yearly cash programming.

As such, the DBM argued that requests should be supported with documents to substantiate their implementation readiness, such as budget execution and corresponding permits and clearances for construction activities, among others.

A futile attempt?

As Congress now deliberates on the 2025 National Expenditure Program, agencies once again try to lobby for a portion of the hundred-billion-peso Tobacco Fund.

For the Tier 1 level of NTA, P550.5 million was approved for its tobacco farmers' production assistance and other operating requirements. However, its P709.92 million proposal for Tier 2 was not included.

Tier 2 would have funded additional coverage for its tobacco farmers' production assistance, STEP block farming project, tobacco research and grading institute and improved tobacco seedling production.

Under the government's two-tier budget process, ongoing spending is considered in Tier 1, and proposals for new and expanded spending are evaluated in Tier 2.

After Tier 1 is completed, the DBM would know what the ongoing spending requirements for existing activities and projects will be for the next three fiscal years. These will be used to update the expenditure plan and fiscal strategy.

The government can then calculate the fiscal space that will be available to fund new projects or scale up existing activities in terms of scope, timing, number or type of beneficiaries, design and implementation method.

Given all these, the 2025 special provision for the Tobacco Fund allocates P550.5 million to be used by the NTA for its operating requirements.

This is sourced from 40 percent of the balance of the entire collection from the specific taxes on locally-manufactured Virginia-type cigarettes and tariff duties on imported leaf tobacco, after setting aside the share of the LGUs and BIR.

High hopes remain

Just like the NTA, the BIR can only hope that funds will eventually be accessed to benefit its operations and help contribute to the higher collection of excise taxes.

This year, the BIR requested P450 million from the fund, lower than its P600-million request. As expected, the revenue agency will not get any amount next year. Will it ever stop asking despite the rejections?

“Just because it's not happening does not mean we have to stop. One of these days, people will also learn about this. And once we succeed, that's the time that we will begin to ask for more,” BIR assistant commissioner Jethro Sabariaga said.

The BIR is also planning to appeal to the Special Assistant to the President on Investment and Economic Affairs, Frederick Go, to convince the DBM to release the fund.

Last May, President Marcos called on the BIR and the Bureau of Customs to strengthen efforts in protecting the local tobacco industry against smuggling.

“Honestly, it’s easy to let go of that, it’s an added accountability anyway. But if it will improve the way that I do my job, if it will improve my people, I should continue to lobby for it,” Sabariaga said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/08/30/2381497/special-report-tobacco-farmers-pin-hopes-60-year-old-fund>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Hog vaccination vs ASF starts

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

August 30, 2024 | 12:00am



Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said 10,000 doses of ASF vaccine acquired through emergency procurement would be used to inoculate pigs in the area.

AFP / File

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) will start today the controlled vaccination of hogs against African swine fever in Lobo, Batangas, the “ground zero” of ASF outbreaks.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said 10,000 doses of ASF vaccine acquired through emergency procurement would be used to inoculate pigs in the area.

“The 10,000 (doses) are still not enough for Batangas,” De Mesa said, noting the province’s one million hog population.

He said the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) and local veterinarians have completed testing hogs covered by the vaccination program.

“It’s all systems go for the vaccination in Lobo. Those (hogs) tested were negative (for ASF) and healthy. The vaccination will proceed at 9 a.m.,” De Mesa said.

“Each vial contains 50 doses. It is necessary for the vaccination to be strategic, because unlike during COVID, wherein people go to vaccination centers, the pigs will be vaccinated in farms,” he added.

De Mesa said the vaccination would be administered by a licensed veterinarian under the supervision of BAI personnel and the municipal veterinarian.

The vaccination will only cover hogs raised in backyard farms, he said.

After Batangas, the vaccination will prioritize other red zones or infected areas including Laguna, Mindoro, Quezon and Rizal as well as North Cotabato.

De Mesa said another 150,000 doses of ASF vaccine will arrive in the country next week.

He said the vaccine would be stored in the warehouse of the distributor until the procurement process is completed, which normally takes 45 days.

The government allocated P350 million for the procurement of the vaccines, which will be provided for free to hog raisers.

Farmers’s group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag) said there would be no pork shortage in December, when demand for pork and pork products is high.

Sinag chairman Rosendo So said only eight percent of the hog population in Batangas is affected by ASF.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/08/30/2381506/hog-vaccination-vs-asf-starts>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

P8.4 million smuggled oranges from Thailand intercepted at MICP

[Evelyn Macairan](#) - The Philippine Star

August 30, 2024 | 12:00am



BOC and DA officials inspected the 3,200 boxes of oranges seized at the Manila International Container Port (MICP).

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Customs (BOC) and Department of Agriculture (DA) yesterday prevented the entry into the country of P8.422 million worth of oranges believed to be smuggled from Thailand.

BOC and DA officials inspected the 3,200 boxes of oranges seized at the Manila International Container Port (MICP).

Personnel of the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (CIIS) confiscated the shipment after receiving “derogatory information” from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

The oranges were illegally imported as the shipment lacked the required sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance, the BPI said.

Customs officials said unsanitary imported agricultural products pose health risks to consumers.

“Smuggling does not only pose a threat to the country’s security, but also puts our consumers at risk,” the BOC said.

Representatives from the BOC’s CIIS, Enforcement and Security Service, Anti-Illegal Drug Task Force and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency were present during the inspection of the smuggled oranges.

The fruits will be destroyed in accordance with the DA’s Department Order No. 09, to ensure that the goods are not sold in the market.

The records of the subject importation were also referred to the Bureau Action Team Against Smuggling for case buildup and prosecution of those behind the smuggling of the oranges.

“This effort is aligned with the BOC’s commitment to President Marcos’ directive to combat smuggling and protect the safety of the public,” Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio said.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/08/30/2381530/p84-million-smuggled-oranges-thailand-intercepted-micp>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Filipina agriculturist recognized by World Food Prize Foundation

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

August 30, 2024 | 12:00am



Norhaya Demacaling.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — A Filipina agricultural scientist and sustainable farming advocate has been recognized as one of the young global innovators in agriculture by the prestigious World Food Prize Foundation.

Norhaya Demacaling of the School for Experiential and Entrepreneurial Development? (SEED) Philippines has been chosen as one of 38 people who will be in the inaugural Top Agri-food Pioneers (TAP) list of the World Food Prize Foundation this year.

Demacaling is the lone awardee from the Philippines. The awardees are from 20 countries across six continents, representing a range of ages and work in various fields, from farming to animal and crop science, nutrition, education and advocacy, according to the foundation.

The World Food Prize Foundation cited Demacaling for her significant contribution to plant science and environmental management research with a focus on improving crop productivity and resilience.

The foundation noted that the work of Demacaling at SEED Philippines often involves developing innovative solutions for smallholder farmers that would enhance their ability to adapt to climate change and environmental challenges.

Demacaling, who is the chief agriculturist and director of programming of SEED Philippines, collaborates with local communities and international organizations to promote effective and eco-friendly farming techniques, the World Food Prize Foundation said.

“Her expertise and dedication to improving food security and agricultural practices have earned her recognition in the field of sustainable agriculture,” the foundation said.

SEED Philippines seeks to raise the next generation of agri-entrepreneurs in the country by focusing on rural development through programs that aim to uplift people from poverty.

The group has partnered with TESDA in providing a holistic approach to organic agriculture and farm establishment through classroom instruction, hands-on learning and community application, according to its website.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/08/30/2381495/filipina-agriculturist-recognized-world-food-prize-foundation>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

P8.4-M illegal shipment of Thai oranges seized

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:10 AM August 30, 2024

The Bureau of Customs (BOC) stopped on Thursday a shipment of oranges from Thailand worth P8.4 million at the Manila International Container Port for lacking the required permits from the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Industry.

The BOC said the 3,200 cartons of fresh oranges did not have the mandatory sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance, leading to their seizure.

The oranges, which were inspected by representatives from the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service, Enforcement and Security Service, Customs Anti-Illegal Drug Task Force, X-ray Inspection Project and Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, were also checked for drugs although none was found.

The shipment will undergo condemnation proceedings to ensure that the goods will not enter local markets. —*JANE BAUTISTA*

READ MORE

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1978129/p8-4-m-illegal-shipment-of-thai-oranges-seized>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Stronger response to China's bullying

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:07 AM August 30, 2024

It was, according to a crew member of BRP Datu Sanday who has joined several maritime patrols and been exposed to water cannon attacks by the China Coast Guard (CCG), the “worst” incident he had experienced.

On Sunday, five CCG ships took turns firing water cannons at the vessel operated by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR). Not content with that, they also rammed the BFAR vessel six times near Escoda (Sabina) Shoal in the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

The BFAR ship, which suffered engine failure and damage to its starboard and port sides, and its communication and navigational equipment, had to abort its humanitarian operation to bring supplies to Filipino fishermen at Escoda.

Last weekend's attack was the latest provocation by China's coast guard and militia vessels.

On Aug. 19, the CCG rammed two Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) ships conducting regular and routine logistics missions in the WPS. Not surprisingly, given China's overt moves that contradict the supposed “provisional understanding” on the issue between Manila and Beijing, China ascribed the incident to PCG vessels “illegally enter[ing]” the waters of Escoda and “deliberately” colliding with CCG ships in the shoal. The PCG said it was gathering evidence to debunk this.

Aerial encounter

Aside from blocking, tailing, ramming, and aiming water cannons at BFAR and PCG vessels, China has similarly taken over our country's airspace, firing several flares on Aug. 22 at a BFAR plane monitoring poachers in the internationally recognized exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the Philippines. Earlier, on Aug. 19, the same fisheries plane

was harassed by a Chinese air force fighter jet, which deployed flares “multiple times” at approximately 15 meters near the disputed Scarborough Shoal, a Philippine task force said.

The first aerial encounter on the territorial dispute occurred on Aug. 8, when two Chinese jets flew dangerously close and fired a volley of flares in the path of a Philippine Air Force patrol plane.

This, on top of the 129 Chinese vessels tracked from Aug. 13 to Aug. 19 across the WPS, and the waters spanning the country’s EEZ in the South China Sea.

Such actions not only “undermine regional peace and security and further erode [China’s] image with the international community,” but also threaten Philippine vessels and aircraft “engaged in legitimate and regular activities within Philippine territory,” the task force said.

‘Act of war’

What’s worse however is how China’s unwarranted aggression has resulted in injuries to Filipinos manning Philippine vessels in the WPS, as in the case of a soldier who lost his thumb after a CCG ship rammed the Armed Forces of the Philippines’ small boat and pointed knives and axes at the crew during a resupply mission to Ayungin Shoal in June.

During a global forum in Manila, also in May, President Marcos warned that, “if by a willful act” a Filipino is killed in the WPS, it would be “very close” to an “act of war,” that could trigger Manila to invoke the Mutual Defense Treaty with the United States. At the rate that China has been jacking up its unlawful and dangerous maneuvers, that is a real possibility that must be preempted posthaste. Why wait for a Filipino fatality when all manner of diplomatic protests, dialogue, and bilateral agreements have proven ineffective, with China blatantly ignoring them?

Clearly, stronger moves are in order to deter China’s bullying tactics. Continuing a beefed up patrol of disputed areas, and holding regular war games with allied countries are a good start, while Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro’s suggestion for us to look into a wider interpretation of the country’s defense pact with the US bears serious study.

Weighty decision

But while the US is open to escorting Philippine vessels on its rotation and resupply mission, Armed Forces chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. cautioned that this could run afoul of the country’s constitutional ban on foreign forces directly joining local combat

operations. Commendably, he maintained that the Philippines would “first rely on [itself, and] try all options ... [until] we are already constrained from doing it ourselves.”

One option that the National Maritime Council floated last Aug. 20 is the possibility of the Philippines filing a case against China before different bodies, given that its extensive claim of sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, has already been invalidated by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016.

China’s warlike actions are also a gross violation of international law, specifically, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1972 Convention on International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea.

It’s a weighty decision that Mr. Marcos must seriously look into, given that he has the “last word” on any legal action on West Philippine Sea issues. It’s an option that’s bound to earn global support as it upholds a rules-based order and the peaceful settlement of disputes based on international law.

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/176438/stronger-response-to-chinas-bullying>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Cebu, Maguindanao, Sulu targeted for KADIWA stores' VisMin launch

August 29, 2024 | 8:38 pm



A man arranges sacks of rice at a storage facility in Marikina City. — PHILIPPINE STAR/WALTER BOLLOZOS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said Cebu province, Maguindanao, and Sulu were the sites chosen to launch the KADIWA store network in the Visayas and Mindanao.

“By September we will be opening KADIWA stores in Visayas and Mindanao. We’re targeting Cebu, Maguindanao and Sulu,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesman Arnel V. de Mesa said in a briefing on Thursday.

The DA has said it hopes to open about 60 KADIWA stores in September.

Government-subsidized KADIWA stores offer low-cost produce to the public, while allowing farmers to sell directly to consumers by doing away with the middleman stages of the supply chain.

Mr. De Mesa added that the KADIWA locations will offer rice at P29 per kilogram to vulnerable segments of society, with the general public also free to buy subsidized rice at other prices.

"The P29 rice locations have NFA (National Food Authority) warehouses near their sites," he said.

Mr. De Mesa said that operating days for the stores will be Thursday to Saturday, in line with other locations.

The DA said it aims to open a network of 1,500 KADIWA outlets nationwide. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/08/29/616992/cebu-maguindanao-sulu-targeted-for-kadiwa-stores-vismin-launch/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

DA won't recommend hike on rice tariffs yet

August 30, 2024 | 12:31 am



A worker unloads a sack of rice from a truck in Manila, May 30, 2024. — PHILIPPINE STAR/RYAN BALDEMOR

By **Adrian H. Halili**, *Reporter*

THE DEPARTMENT of Agriculture said that it would not yet recommend raising tariffs on imported rice since retail prices have not gone down.

"Before 400,000 metric tons (MT) were shipped per month, since June, July, and August, almost 150,000 MT of rice have entered... So, it's not enough stock for us to recommend the raising of tariffs," Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. told reporters on the sidelines of a poultry and livestock event on Wednesday.

Between the months of June and August, rice imports at a 15% tariff averaged to about 150,000 MT per month, he said.

As of Aug. 22, Philippine rice imports amounted to 2.72 million MT, data from the Bureau of Plant Industry showed.

"The price of rice in the market has not yet decreased. Besides, the problem is, *konti pa lang ang pumasok na bigas* at 15% (few shipments came in at 15%)," Mr. Tiu Laurel said.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. signed Executive Order No. (EO) 62, which reduced tariffs on imported rice to 15% from 35% until 2028, in an effort to lower the price of the staple.

EO 62, which took effect in July, mandated a review of the tariff policy every four months to reflect changes in global prices and supply. A review will be conducted by November.

Earlier, Mr. Tiu Laurel said the DA would propose to raise rice import tariffs once local prices fall to about P42-P45 per kilo.

Imported well-milled rice in Metro Manila markets was sold at P45-P55 per kilo, while local well-milled rice was sold at P48-P50 per kilo, according to DA's price monitor as of Aug. 28

On the other hand, imported regular milled rice was sold at P46-P50 per kilo, while local rice was sold at P45-P50.

"I've always said that once you lower tariffs... it does not mean that the price will drop immediately because from January to June, a lot of rice was imported, almost 450,000 MT a month," he added.

Mr. Tiu Laurel said that in the first half of the year, imports were in excess of the country's 320,000 MT monthly requirement for rice.

"So, *may excess talaga na nabili at nabayaran ng buwis nang mahal... Aabot ng mga* mid-October or end of October *para maubos 'yung* old stocks (So, there is indeed an excess supply of rice that was purchased and taxed at higher prices. The old stocks could only be depleted by the middle or end of October)," he added.

The Agriculture chief said world rice prices remain elevated amid the ban on rice exports by the Indian government.

India last year banned non-basmati white rice exports, citing the need to safeguard domestic supply.

"Plus, Indonesia and Malaysia are again buying rice for their buffer stocks, that is why international prices are not declining," he added.

The Philippines remains to be the world's top importer for rice, according to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Asked to comment, Roehlano M. Briones, a senior research fellow at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies said traders are hesitant to import rice as various agricultural groups filed a petition asking the Supreme Court to nullify EO 62.

"There is no guarantee that the tariff valid on the date of making a purchase order will be the same tariff upon unloading at Customs," he said in a Viber message.

Earlier, industry and farmer groups have questioned the validity of the EO 62, claiming lack of public consultation and the threat it poses to local rice producers.

"In the market, they are saying that the price of rice will drop by P6 to P7 a kilo, but that would not happen because the traders have already imported the rice at a higher tariff," Teodoro C. Mendoza, an agronomist and a retired professor at the University of the Philippines Los Baños, said in a phone call.

Foundation for Economic Freedom (FEF) President Calixto V. Chikiamco said the government should permanently lower rice import tariffs to 15% or adopt a variable tariff rate.

"(There should be) lower tariffs during lean season and higher tariffs during harvest season," Mr. Chikiamco said in a Viber message.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2024/08/30/616979/da-wont-recommend-hike-on-rice-tariffs-yet/>

REMATE:

PH mag-aangkat ng 16,000 MT yellow onions

August 29, 2024 10:28



MANILA, Philippines- Mag-aangkat ang Pilipinas ng 16,000 metric tons (MT) ng sariwang dilaw na sibuyas upang masiguro ang sapat na suplay ng agricultural commodity sa panahon ng holiday season.

Sa katunayan, inaprubahan na ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. ang memorandum ng pagpapalabas ng sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC) para sa importasyon ng sariwang dilaw na sibuyas.

“Inaprubaba ko na nu’ng Lunes ‘yung pag-import ng white o yellow onion dahil ang stocks natin sa tantsa ay depleted na,” ayon kay Laurel.

Wika ni Laurel, aangkat ang bansa ng 16,000 MT ng dilaw na sibuyas para matugunan ang kakulangan ng suplay para sa natitirang araw at buwan ngayong taon.

Ang dami ay base sa monthly per capita consumption ng bansa at magsisilbi bilang 'buffer' para ma-stabilize ang presyo sa merkado.

“Limited quantity lang ‘to ng white onion na ini-import para lang to stabilize prices of white onion,” pahayag niya.

Base sa memorandum, ang suplay ng dilaw na sibuyas na 3,296.50 MT ay inaasahan na magtatagal lamang ng hanggang Agosto 25, 2024

Ang first batch ng imported yellow onions, ayon kay Laurel, ay dapat na dumating sa bansa “by the end of this week or early next week.”

Ang pagdating ng kalakal ay hindi dapat lalampas sa buwan ng Disyembre ng taong kasalukuyan upang hindi sumabay sa harvest season, na magsisimula sa Enero 2025.

Nakasaad pa rin sa memorandum na sa nalalapit na holiday season, ang demand para sa dilaw na sibuyas ay inaasahang magreresulta ng pagtaas ng presyo sa merkado.

Samantala, sinabi ni Laurel na ang suplay mula sa locally produced red onions ay “good until March of next year.” **Kris Jose**

<https://remate.ph/ph-mag-aangkat-ng-16000-mt-yellow-onions/>

REMATE:

PBBM: Pwede nang mangisda sa mga lugar na apektado ng Bataan oil spill

August 29, 2024 10:41



MANILA, Philippines- Inanunsyo ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. nitong Miyerkules na maaari nang ipagpatuloy ng mga mangingisda ang kanilang fishing activities ilang linggo matapos ang oil spills kamakailan sa katubigan ng Bataan ay makaantala sa kabuhayan ng libo-libo sa lalawigan at sa mga karatig-lugar.

“Nasabihan lang ako ni Secretary [Francisco Tiu] Laurel ng [Department of Agriculture] na mula ngayon ay maari nang mangisda, wala nang oil spill, pwede nang ituloy ang inyong hanapbuhay,” pahayag ni Marcos Jr. sa pamamahagi ng tulong sa mga apektadong mangingisda sa General Trias, Cavite.

Hindi binanggit ng Pangulo ang mga lugar sa Manila Bay kung saan maaari nang makapangisda, subalit batay sa datos ng

pamahalaan, mahigit 25,000 pamilya ng mga mangingisda sa lalawigan ng Cavite ang apektado ng oil spills kamakailan na nagdulot ng mahigit P250 milyong economic losses.

“Masaya akong nababalita na matagumpay nating napigilan ang pagtagas ng langis mula sa mga barkong ito partikular ang Terranova para hindi na ito makapinsala sa kalikasan.”

Anang Pangulo, patuloy ang pagsisikap na tanggalin ang industrial oil mula sa Terranova, na maaari pa umanong abutin ng 10 araw.

“Kung meron pang natirang langis baka doon kukunin. Kaya naging maayos naman ang ating pagtugon sa krisis na ito at marami ang tumulong sa atin.”

Samantala, patuloy din ang pagselyo ng mga awtoridad sa manhole mula sa isa pang lumubog na tanker na MT Jason Bradley bilang paghahanda para sa pagpapalutang sa vessel, maging siphoning ng seawater mula sa MV Mirola 1. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/pbbm-pwede-nang-mangisda-sa-mga-lugar-na-apektado-ng-bataan-oil-spill/>

MANILA STANDARD

Customs, DA prep for ‘ber’ months

By Joel E. Zurbano

August 29, 2024, 11:30 pm

The Bureau of Customs (BOC) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) are enhancing security at Manila port to handle the anticipated surge in goods during the upcoming holiday season and “ber” months.

The “ber months,” a reference to September, October, November, and December, are critical for Customs because unscrupulous traders will try to find the opportunity to sneak in their illegal goods in time with the high volume of imports at the ports.

On Thursday, agents of the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service – Manila International Container Port (CIIS-MICP) foiled the entry of about P8.422 million worth of suspected smuggled agricultural products in North Harbor Manila.

The shipment, which consisted of 3,200 cartons of fresh oranges, came from Thailand and lacked the required import sanitary clearance from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

CIIS Director Verne Enciso said that the “derogatory information” they received from the BPI led them to the seizure of the shipment.

“This interception highlights the coordination and collaboration among and between key government agencies, and even the various units within the BOC. The information we received was immediately verified by our officers and with the help of agriculture experts, we were able to pin down the cargo,” he said.

The failed attempt to smuggle fresh oranges from Thailand was made possible by the timely information shared by the BPI that the shipment lacked the mandatory Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance (SPSIC).

CIIS-MICP chief Alvin Enciso said his team immediately implemented the order as unsanitary imported agricultural products can pose a health risk to local consumers.

“Smuggling does not only pose a threat to the country’s security but more so, it puts our consumers at risk and even impacts the local economy. In the BOC, we are not only

committed to protect and secure our borders, but we are also dedicated to ensure that our markets remain free from harmful imported products that can create an avalanche of health and environmental problems,” he added.

Under the leadership of District Collector Carmelita Talusan, the MICP continues to be vigilant against illegal goods and collaborate with other agencies to protect public health and safety, especially now the Christmas season is coming.

The “ber months” period is critical for Customs because unscrupulous traders will try to find the opportunity to sneak in their illegal goods in time with the high volume of imports at the ports.

Talusan said they will continue vigilance against smuggling in the coming months to ensure that all duties and taxes are being paid for increased volume of imports that arrive at the ports for the holidays.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/national/314490711/customs-da-prep-for-ber-months.html>

156K benefit from P20 per kilo of rice program

By Mahatma Randy V. Datu
August 30, 2024

BOTOLOAN, Zambales — After two months of going around the second district of Zambales, a total of 156,443 families have benefitted from the rice subsidy program that offers the staple food at P20 per kilogram.

The program, which reached 10 towns in the province, was made possible through the initiative of Rep. Doris Maniquiz and the support of House Speaker Martin Romualdez and Tingog Partylist Rep. Yedda Marie Romualdez.

Maniquiz said the P20 per kilogram price of the commercial rice is part of her administration's thrust to provide affordable rice to the Zambaleños, which is in line with the goal of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.



VALUE FOR MONEY Zambales residents line up for a chance to buy quality commercial rice at P20 per kilogram under the rice subsidy program of Rep. Doris Maniquiz. PHOTO BY MAHATMA RANDY DATU

"Our rice subsidy program was successful. This was fully implemented due to our unified hard work and cooperation," Maniquiz said.

"This is certainly a big help to our fellow Zambaleños, especially during the rainy season when the harvest of farmers is low, many people have little income and the level of poverty is higher in this time when every cent is valuable."

Maniquiz also expressed her gratitude to Gov. Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., the mayors of the towns and the barangay leaders for supporting the program. She also lauded the hardworking staff and volunteers of the Kalingang Nanay Bing and the Tingog Centers who provided their time and effort to ensure the proper distribution of rice in every town.

"Thank you everyone for making this rice subsidy program a success. This is a win for all of us, a testament that unity and cooperation can surpass any challenges we face as we progress together under the Bagong Pilipinas," she said.

The rice subsidy program is on its 11th year as Maniquiz started this when she was then mayor of Botolan.

The funds for the subsidy came from her own pocket, in which she continued to her first term as lawmaker, and still continues to do so as member of the Tingog Partylist.

For the closing ceremony of the rice subsidy program, a simple celebration was held where Maniquiz was also congratulated for winning an award at the Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair (BPSF) Summit 2024.

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President Marcos, who led the BPSF Summit at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City on Aug. 19, 2024, gave recognition to 21 lawmakers who embraced the challenge of bringing the Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair to their provinces, including Maniquiz.

Maniquiz was cited for her unwavering dedication that has become the key in bringing important and valuable government services directly to the community, and ensuring that every Filipino will benefit from the dream of a new and progressive Philippines.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/30/regions/156k-benefit-from-p20-per-kilo-of-rice-program/1967782>

32 provinces affected by ASF

By Janine Alexis Miguel

August 29, 2024

THE number of provinces with active cases of African swine fever (ASF) increased to 32 while the affected barangay rose to 458, the Department of Agriculture (DA) reported.

Data from DA's Bureau of Animal Industry showed that the areas with active cases of the disease rose compared to June, which only had 12 affected provinces and 32 barangay (villages).

"The number [of affected areas] really increased. We can see on June 7 there were only 32 barangay with active cases [and] it gradually went up. By July, it was 150 and by early August, it had reached 251," Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said on Tuesday.

The most affected provinces are Batangas, Occidental Mindoro and North Cotabato.

As of August 21, the DA has identified 87 barangay in North Cotabato, 69 in Mindoro and 66 in Batangas with active ASF cases.

Other provinces with reported active cases of ASF are La Union, Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Cavite, Laguna, Quezon, Rizal, Marinduque, Oriental Mindoro, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate, Aklan, Cebu, Negros Oriental, Leyte, Samar, Zamboanga del Sur, Misamis Oriental, Davao Occidental, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur and Basilan.

In response, de Mesa said that the department will start ASF vaccinations earlier than planned, starting August 30 in Batangas.

The first batch of vaccination aims to roll out around 2,000 doses of AVAC ASF Live vaccine, the first ASF vaccine in the Philippines from Vietnam and approved by the Food and Drug and Administration for regulated use by the government.

The rise in ASF has been attributed to several factors, including the start of the wet season which helps the virus spread through flooding in areas where infected pigs are buried and inadequate biosecurity measures.

Despite concerns on the hog population, the DA official assured the public that pork supply remains sufficient in the country.

Citing data from the National Meat Inspection Service, de Mesa said that the volume of frozen pork in cold storage facilities increased marginally from 55,911 metric tons to 56,000 MT. He noted that the majority of the volume was imported accounting 98.3 percent while the rest are local meat.

The department expressed optimism that the country's meat inventory will meet the demand, even during the holiday season.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/29/regions/32-provinces-affected-by-asf/1967485>

A Guinea pig for the ASF vaccine?

By Dr. Fermin D. Adriano, PhD

August 30, 2024

Second of two parts

In Part I of this column, we reported that the Department of Agriculture (DA) recently announced that it is preparing for the rollout of the vaccine this September from Vietnam. This, despite the absence of satisfactory responses to the questions of Sen. Cynthia Villar during the Oct. 25, 2023 Senate hearing on the introduction of the Vietnam-produced African swine fever (ASF) vaccine called AVAC ASF LIVE (AAL), and the issues raised by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in its letter of disapproval to issue a Certificate of Product Registration (CPR) on Dec. 19, 2023 to said vaccine.

The joint press conference of the DA and the FDA held at the end of July revealed that a CPR was already issued for the AAL vaccine. Note that the issuance of a CPR means a company can now market, import, export, distribute and sell the FDA approved product. Curiously, in that same press conference, it was also announced that AAL has been "approved for restricted use only by the DA with validity of two years."

This indicates that there is continuing concern over the massive use and distribution of the AAL vaccine. And rightly so.

In 2022, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service withdrew the select agent regulatory exclusions for two ASF virus strains used in the production of AAL vaccine "because it has evaluated new information and determined that they have the potential to pose a severe threat to animal health or animal products."

A Reuters report on Dec. 6, 2023 claimed that USDA scientists have never been given access to Vietnam's trial data. This was confirmed by the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH), which complained that the vaccine manufacturer AVAC Vietnam JSC has not shared sufficient data with international research bodies.

WOAH further warned that if any mutation happens, it can pose real danger not only on the existing hog stocks but future ones, not to mention other animals and more importantly, human beings.

Not surprisingly, no ASF-affected countries outside of Vietnam, and soon the Philippines, has officially approved the use and distribution of AAL.

The AAL vaccine is a genetically modified organism (GMO) product. Because of alteration from established organisms, a GMO product is alien to the environment wherein its impact is unknown because there is no precedent to base judgment on whether it is safe or not to plant, animal and human beings.

It is in view of the new challenges posed by biotechnology that Executive Order 514, dated March 17, 2004, was signed by then-president Gloria Arroyo to strengthen the role and function of the National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines (NCBP). This body is tasked, among others, to review any GMO materials, prior to distribution in the country to ensure that "administrative system and decision-making processes established in the NBF (National Biosafety Framework) shall be complied with" (Section 3 of Executive Order 514).

Since AAL is a genetically modified product, it should have been submitted for review and approval by the NCBP, besides FDA and Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI). Note also that the Court of Appeals recently ruled against the use of GMO products, such as the Golden Rice and Bt eggplant, which are plant organisms, as it viewed that insufficient research was undertaken by their proponents to ensure that they are safe for human consumption and the environment.

It therefore comes as a shock that DA announced the rollout of around 10,000 dosages of AAL to be used mostly in municipalities in Batangas hit hard by ASF. This Vietnam-produced vaccine has not been tested in other countries, and the results of the trial tests done in Vietnam have not been widely distributed for scientists to verify their findings.

In other words, the Philippines is going to be a guinea pig for this vaccine. What is worrying is that DA has not revealed to the public the protocols that will be observed in this experimentation.

The public has the right to know exactly which areas and farms will serve as trial sites. And the public has to know the duration of the trial tests, and when the results will be known and publicly shared. Furthermore, the public has the right to know that if things go wrong, what will be the indemnification mechanisms that are in place.

The public has the right to know how the DA and the private company distributor shall dispose of the carcasses of hogs should something wrong happen to the trial tests, or just even the disposition of hogs used in the experiment. And if the vaccine negatively affected not only the trial hog population but also other animals and the environment,

what will be the protocol for compensating those harmed by this vaccine? Will the government and the sole distributor of the vaccine, KPP Powers Inc., shoulder the cost of damages?. The public has the right to know how much is the actual selling price of the AAL vaccine in Vietnam and how much is the DA willing to pay for it. A cursory Google search reveals that the per dosage price of the vaccine in Vietnam is 60,000 dong. This is equivalent to around \$2.40 or around P136. Why is the announced procurement price of the DA around P500 to P600 per dosage?. China, one of the largest hog producers in the world, was similarly hit hard by ASF. Reports indicate that it has lost nearly 40 percent of its hog population due to the virus.

As a result, China, with all its resources and technological might, has been assiduously trying to find a vaccine for the ASF but has not attained categorical success. As a result, some of its hog raisers resorted to using illegal (not properly and fully tested) vaccines. In a report in the publication called "Pig Progress," E. Wayne Johnson, who is a pig veterinary consultant in Beijing, warned of the dire consequences of the use of unscientifically tested virus, as follows: "... xxx the double deleted (used in China) produces a PRRS-like viral reproductive syndrome in vaccinated sows, with stillbirths, mummifications, embryonic deaths, infertility and abortion."

He added, "Pigs that survive into the growth-finish period appear to shed vaccine virus and pass it to other pigs. Chronic atypical ASF is the result with chronic blood vessel and immune system disease, xxx ... with active zones of necrosis and hemorrhage and chronic lesions with fibrosis are seen in multiple organs microscopically and visibly, particularly in the lymph nodes and the kidneys."

Even assuming for the sake of argument that AAL is not the same vaccine used in China, the question that remains is: Do BAI and FDA have the capability to conduct a rigorous analysis of the possible effects of AAL as China has done on illegal vaccines to determine the full extent of its impact? Wouldn't it be better for a third-party reputable body, like professors and scientists at the UPLB College of Veterinary Medicine, the Department of Animal Science and the National Biotechnology Center to conduct a review of the test results in Vietnam and the ones that will be conducted here?

The stake is too high for the country to leave the decision on government agencies that are politically malleable.

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<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/30/business/top-business/a-guinea-pig-for-the-asf-vaccine/1967790>

DA explains why rice prices stay high despite low tariffs

[Ada Pelonia](#)

[August 30, 2024](#)



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

RICE prices remain elevated due to high world prices and existing inventory of imported staple bought prior to lowering of tariffs.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said rice imports from the January to June period which were still levied with the 35-percent tariff would run out by mid-October.

“May excess talaga na nabili at nabayaran ng buwis nang mahal [There’s really an excess of rice bought at higher tariff],” Laurel told reporters on the sidelines of a poultry and livestock event held in Pasay City last Wednesday.

“It will take until mid- or end of October before the old stocks [bought] at high price will run out,” he added, partly in Filipino.

Laurel also said that international market changes prompt world rice prices to remain high.

“India is still not yet allowing exports of their rice...Indonesia and Malaysia are again buying rice for their buffer stocks that’s why prices are not going down in the international market,” he explained.

Laurel also said there was no reason to raise tariffs since stocks bought at lower rate were still below the usual volume.

“The rice that came in is still at low level, 15 percent [...] so, we don’t have enough stocks to raise that as of the moment,” he said.

Rice import arrivals as of August 22 reached 2.72 million metric tons (MMT), according to the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesman Arnel de Mesa earlier said that shipments after July 6 were already levied with the 15-percent tariff rate.

Rice imports from July 1 to August 22 stood at 376,353.70 metric tons (MT), based on BAI data. This was lower than the average shipments made from the first semester at 390,065.93 MT.

‘Slow decline in rice prices’

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) recently said the pace of the decline in the prices of the staple is still “slow” despite the implementation of Executive Order (EO) 62 which reduced the tariff for rice to 15 percent.

Citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), NEDA Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said the reduction in the retail price of rice has been gradual. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/29/despite-eo-62-rice-price-dip-slow-neda/>)

“But hopefully as the world rice market situation improves, and also stakeholders are able to adjust...we will see improvements [in the price of rice],” Balisacan told Palace reporters in a chance interview last Wednesday.

Based on the DA’s latest price monitoring, the prevailing price of local well-milled and regular milled rice in Metro Manila markets was P52 per kilo and P48 per kilo, respectively.

The prevailing price of imported well-milled and regular milled rice was P52 per kilo and P47 per kilo, respectively.

Image credits: [DA-PhilMech](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/30/da-explains-why-rice-prices-stay-high-despite-low-tariffs/>

DA distributes P135.8 million worth of postharvest facilities, financial assistance to farmers in Nueva Ecija

Ada Pelonia
August 29, 2024



Department of Agriculture Secretary Franciso Tiu Laurel Jr.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) distributed P135.8 million worth of postharvest facilities and financial assistance to farmers in Nueva Ecija, the country's largest rice-producing province.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. led separate activities in Jaen and Guimba to distribute rice mills and dryers that will benefit two farmers' cooperatives with a total membership of 344 farmers tilling 476 hectares in the two municipalities.

The Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech) provided the postharvest facilities. PhilMech gets the lion's share of the P10 billion taken from the Rice Competitiveness and Enhancement Fund (RCEF), funded by duties on imported rice set under the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL).

“The government is giving back to farmers what is due them and with the help of our legislators we could provide rice producers more assistance to enhance their competitiveness through the extension of the Rice Tariffication Law,” Laurel said in a statement.

In Jaen, the DA and PhilMech provided the Pakul Primary Multi-purpose Cooperative with a rice processing system valued at P53.6 million and recirculating dryers valued at P7.06 million.

According to the department, the Pakul Cooperative is primarily focused on rice cultivation and has 172 farmer members who will directly benefit from the project.

“Collectively, the farmers manage a total area of 238 hectares of rice fields out of 6,208.2 hectares of rice area in Jaen. It has existing services for drying of palay but the machine and equipment they use are dilapidated due to age,” the DA said in a statement.

It added that the DA’s regional office also turned over RCEF production technologies and provided interventions worth P13 million while assistance from the High-Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) of around P1.9 million was also made available.

In Guimba, the department turned over the Cooperative Enterprise for True Economic Reform a similar rice processing system worth P48.58 million plus three 12-ton recirculating dryers worth P11.71 million.

“The rice farmers’ cooperative has 172 members who collectively manages a total area of 238 hectares of rice fields out of 15,500 hectares. Cooperative Enterprise’s also has an existing service for drying of palay but these are dilapidated due to age,” the DA said.

Laurel said he envisions more irrigation, postharvest facilities, and other infrastructures that would help increase farm yields, lower the cost of inputs, and raise farmers’ incomes while assuring the country’s food security.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/29/da-distributes-p135-8-million-worth-of-postharvest-facilities-financial-assistance-to-farmers-in-nueva-ecija/>