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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# DA chief orders expanded controlled testing of ASF vaccine to more regions

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

Sep 9, 2024 03:34 PM



DA Secretary Francisco 'Kiko' Tiu Laurel Jr. (JEL SANTOS/ MB PHOTO)

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has directed the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) to extend the controlled testing of the African Swine Fever (ASF) vaccine to more areas across Luzon, as well as in red zones in the Visayas and Mindanao.

Last week, the BAI launched its first round of vaccinations in Lobo, Batangas, which has been heavily affected by the ASF outbreak since the onset of the monsoon season.

“We will cast a wider net to include La Union, Quezon, Mindoro, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, and Cebu in the BAI’s controlled testing of the initial 150,000 doses of ASF vaccines we have imported from Vietnam,” said Laurel.

The agency said the vaccines are being provided free of charge to hog farmers to support their efforts in combating the disease.

As such, Laurel emphasized that commercial pig farms in highly affected areas would receive the vaccine to protect their stocks.

“Our goal is to ensure a steady supply of pork in the market and stabilize prices,” he added.

On Aug. 30, the DA started the inoculation of hogs against ASF in Batangas.

Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa, the spokesperson of the DA, said the agency prioritized vaccinating small-hold and backyard hog-raisers in Batangas.<sup>[1]</sup> Earlier, the agriculture department had increased indemnification for diseased pigs surrendered for culling, raising the compensation ceiling to ₱12,000 for breeders from the previous maximum of ₱5,000.

The government has earmarked ₱300 million to purchase around 600,000 doses of the ASF vaccine from Vietnam, along with an extra ₱50 million to cover inoculation-related expenses.

ASF resurfaced in the Philippines in 2019, spreading to more than 3,800 barangays across 53 provinces by mid-2022. This led to a nearly 25 percent decline in local pork production from June to October 2021 versus the same period in 2020.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/9/da-chief-orders-expanded-controlled-testing-of-asf-vaccine-to-more-regions>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Number of ASF-affected barangays increases to 472

[Cecille Suerte Felipe](#), [Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

September 10, 2024 | 12:00am



Senator Cynthia Villar presides over the Senate hearing into calls for the declaration of a state of national calamity due to African Swine Fever (ASF) on September 9, 2024

STAR / Jesse Bustos

MANILA, Philippines — African swine fever (ASF) continues to spread in the country as the number of infected barangays has increased to 472 from 458, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Data from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), an attached agency of the DA, showed 14 barangays were added to the “red” or ASF-infected zones as of Sept. 6.

The virus has affected 115 municipalities, 32 provinces and 15 regions, the DA said.

Among provinces, North Cotabato recorded the highest number of ASF-affected barangays with 108 followed by Batangas with 96, Quezon province with 91 and La Union with 30.

As this developed, Sen. Cynthia Villar criticized the DA for failing to contain the disease.

Villar, chairperson of the Senate committee on agriculture, urged President Marcos to declare a state of national calamity due to ASF.

She questioned the DA's vaccination trial and the non-utilization of an ASF border facility in Bulacan to stop the spread of the disease.

Villar said the country's ASF cases have never gone down and even continued to increase.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/09/10/2384111/number-asf-affected-barangays-increases-472>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

## **DA expands coverage of ASF vaccine testing**

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:05 AM September 10, 2024



DA Sec. Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) plans to carry out an ongoing trial run of African swine fever (ASF) vaccines bought from Vietnam in even more areas to help hog farmers find a cure for the viral disease.

In a statement on Monday, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the DA “[would] cast a wider net” to include areas in Luzon and regions designated as red zones (with active ASF cases) in Visayas and Mindanao.

He added that 150,000 doses of the ASF vaccine would be used to inoculate hogs in La Union, Quezon, Mindoro, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Cebu provinces as part of the controlled testing being conducted by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI).

Commercial pig farms in areas with numerous infections will also be covered to safeguard their stocks.

All vaccines will be provided free of charge.

“Our goal is to ensure a steady supply of pork in the market and stabilize prices,” Tiu Laurel said.

This marked the first time the government conducted controlled vaccine testing after it recorded the first ASF outbreak in the country in 2019.

The DA earlier earmarked P350 million for the program: P300 million for the procurement of about 600,000 doses of Vietnamese-made ASF vaccines and P50 million for inoculation-related costs.

The first shipment covering 10,000 doses arrived last month. Another 150,000 doses were later delivered but these have yet to be used.

Among the initial recipients of the ASF vaccines in an inoculation drive conducted on Aug. 30 were 41 hogs in Lobo town, Batangas province—ground zero of the ASF resurgence in the country.

Five of the hogs, however, eventually died, Lobo Mayor Lota Manalo said during a hearing conducted by the Senate committee on agriculture, food and agrarian reform.

Over the weekend, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the remaining 440,000 doses were expected to arrive and be released within October to sustain the government-controlled vaccination campaign.

The country has active ASF cases in 14 regions, 31 provinces and 109 municipalities, based on the BAI’s tally as of Sept. 6.

ASF is a highly contagious viral disease afflicting domestic and wild pigs with a possible mortality rate of 100 percent, according to the World Organization for Animal Health.

While considered not a danger to human health, the disease can have devastating effects on pig populations and the farming economy.

The industry-wide losses to the country’s swine sector have been estimated at around P100 billion. The total swine inventory also dipped by 2.1 percent to 9.86 million heads as of September last year, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

[https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1981592/da-expands-coverage-of-asf-vaccine-testing?utm\\_source=\(direct\)&utm\\_medium=gallery](https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1981592/da-expands-coverage-of-asf-vaccine-testing?utm_source=(direct)&utm_medium=gallery)

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

## **Farm losses from ‘Enteng’ balloon to P2.3B**

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:05 AM September 10, 2024

Tropical Storm “Enteng” (international name: Yagi) has left the country a few days ago, but the agriculture sector continues to suffer from its aftermath.

In a bulletin issued by the Department of Agriculture (DA) on Monday, farm losses because of the recent weather disturbance have swelled to P2.26 billion, surging by over 240 percent from the P659.01 million damage initially reported by the agency on Sept. 6.

The storm took a toll on the livelihood of 59,669 farmers in the regions of Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon), Bicol, Western Visayas and Eastern Visayas.

It wiped out 51,728 metric tons (MT) of agricultural produce, mostly rice, covering 37,471 hectares (ha) of land.

Estimated values are subject to further validation, according to the DA. Regional offices, along with concerned local government units and disaster risk reduction and management offices, are conducting thorough validation and assessment.

The DA said estimated losses from the typhoon have increased after recording losses on rice and damaged irrigation facilities from various regions.

Rice was mostly hit by Enteng, with losses accounting for 48.97 percent or P1.11 billion of the total.

The volume of production loss was pegged at 48,646 MT spanning 34,935 ha. Irrigation facilities were affected as well, comprising 47.88 percent or P1.08 billion.



Enteng also hit other commodities: corn (P42.66 million), high-value crops (P26.66 million), cassava (P1.98 million), and livestock and poultry (P16,000).

On average, local palay output falls by around 500,000 MT to 600,000 MT annually due to typhoons and other natural calamities, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa previously said.

“This year, we have El Niño [and] we have La Niña. [It is] expected that losses will increase,” he said.

La Niña, characterized by above-normal rainfall conditions, is expected to emerge between September and November, based on a previous forecast of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

The DA previously slashed its projection on this year’s palay production to 20.44 million MT due to the combined impact of El Niño and La Niña phenomena. **INQ**

<https://business.inquirer.net/479216/farm-losses-from-enteng-balloon-to-p2-3b>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

## **Negros Occidental distributes farm animals to ASF-affected farmers**

By: [Carla Gomez](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:35 AM September 10, 2024



**GIFT OF DUCKS** A farmer receives ducks from the Negros Occidental provincial government on Sept. 3 as part of the assistance for hog raisers affected by the African swine fever. —Richard Malihan/contributor

**BACOLOD CITY, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL** — The Negros Occidental provincial government has distributed P724,000 worth of farm animals to help raisers recover from the African swine fever (ASF) that has hit the hog industry in the province.

Among those given by the province to farmers' associations, local governments and cooperatives were boars, cattle, free-range chicks, ducks and sheep.

Gov. Eugenio Jose Lacson said the distribution of animals bred in two provincial government farms will be held on a monthly basis, with the first held on Sept. 3.

## **Self-sufficient**

“We have become self-sufficient. We are now producing our own animals,” Lacson said.

The governor said the provincial government was also monitoring closely the ASF vaccine being administered to hogs in Batangas.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) kicked off on Aug. 30 the controlled trial of a Vietnam-developed ASF live vaccine in Lobo, Batangas—a municipality with one of the highest cases of ASF.

“I understand that they will focus first on Batangas. We are hoping that if these vaccines are available in Region 6 (Western Visayas), we in Negros Occidental will be able to receive some,” Lacson said.

He said the provincial government will first seek free supply from the DA.

“If we see that it is effective, we may consider buying also,” Lacson said.

### **Ban still in place**

In February this year, Lacson issued an executive order that banned the entry of all pigs, boar semen and pork products from areas with reported cases of ASF in order to protect and enable the multimillion-peso hog industry of the province to recover.

The ban involved those coming from Bacolod City, the provincial capital but is politically independent from Negros Occidental; Cebu province, including Camotes and Bantayan islands; Panay and Guimaras islands; Negros Oriental, Eastern Visayas, Luzon and Mindanao; and countries affected with ASF, as declared by the DA.

According to the National Meat Inspection Service, ASF is a highly contagious viral disease that affects pigs, warthogs and boars. It causes pigs to have high fever and lose their appetite, and causes hemorrhages in the skin and internal organs.

Pigs die in a span of two to 10 days upon affliction. There is no known vaccine yet against ASF.

Health officials reiterated that ASF does not pose any threats to humans and that other pork products from infected areas were safe to eat.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1981543/negros-occidental-distributes-farm-animals-to-asf-affected-farmers>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Clinical trials ongoing for ASF, bird flu vaccines

September 9, 2024 | 8:01 pm



PEXELS-BARBARA BARBOSA

THE Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said four African Swine Fever (ASF) and three avian influenza vaccine manufacturers have submitted their products for trials.

“They have not yet submitted their application to us... they have been undergoing clinical trials,” FDA Director General Samuel A. Zacate said in Senate hearing on Monday.

The vaccine manufacturers undergoing trials are from Thailand, the US, and Vietnam, according to Agriculture Assistant Secretary for Poultry and Swine Constance J. Palabrica.

The FDA has so far only approved the AVAC ASF vaccine from Vietnam for a limited government-controlled rollout. It had issued a Certificate of Product Registration, valid for two years and subject to monitoring and annual evaluations.

“The applicant has undergone trial for almost a year... (Certificate of Product Registration) imposes a condition on the market authorization holder to be complied every year. This is an additional layer of protection for our hog farmers,” Mr. Zacate added.

Additionally, the Department of Agriculture (DA) cleared the commercial use of the avian flu vaccine, with priority given to commercial farms. There is no approved bird flu vaccine in the country.

The DA allocated P350 million mostly to procure 600,000 doses for the hog farmers initially targeted. The rollout started on Aug. 30 in Lobo, Batangas.

“The first wave, which is 10,000 doses, was issued... was from emergency procurement. We would like to reduce the infection pressure on Batangas,” Mr. Palabrica added.

He said the initial doses will run out by the end of September, and will be followed by another 150,000 doses.

Separately, Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said that the DA is seeking to expand its controlled ASF vaccine rollout to other parts of Luzon, as well as red zones in the Visayas and Mindanao.

“We will cast a wider net to include La Union, Quezon, Mindoro, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, and Cebu in the BAI’s controlled testing of the initial 150,000 doses of ASF vaccines we have imported from Vietnam,” Mr. Laurel said in a statement.

He added that commercial pig farms located in active infection zones will also receive the ASF vaccines.

“Our goal is to ensure a steady supply of pork in the market and stabilize prices,” he said.

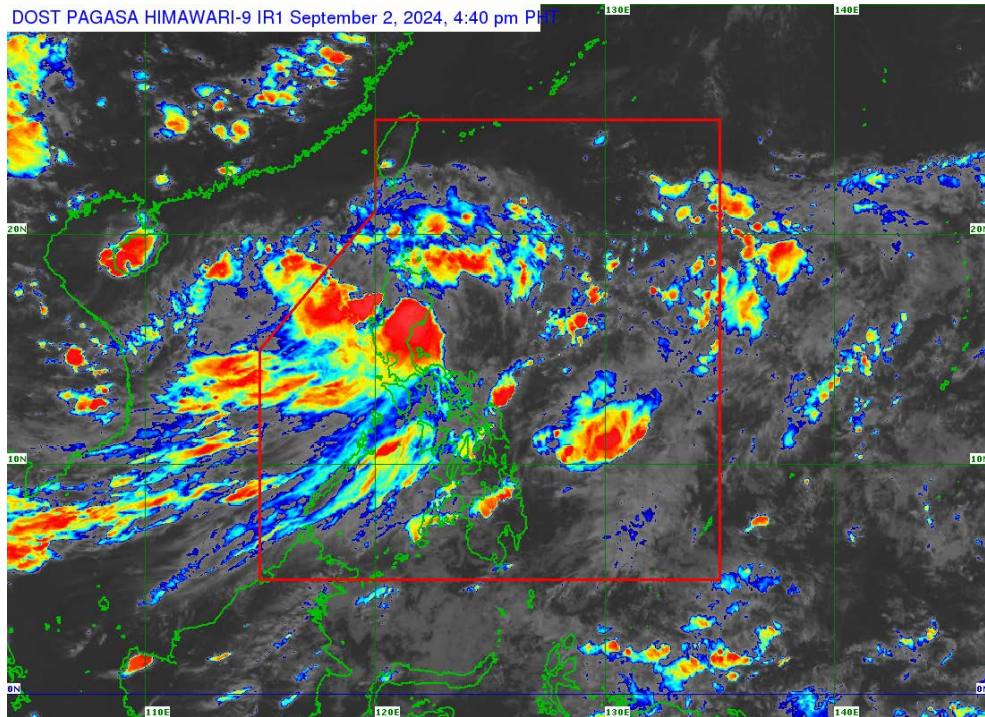
As of Sept. 6, there were 109 municipalities in 31 provinces that had active cases of ASF, according to the BAI. ASF was first detected in the Philippines in 2019. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/09/620263/clinical-trials-ongoing-for-asf-bird-flu-vaccines/>

## BUSINESS WORLD:

# Farm damage from Enteng hits P2.2 billion

September 9, 2024 | 8:01 pm



PAGASA.DOST.GOV.PH

AGRICULTURAL DAMAGE caused by Severe Tropical Storm Enteng (international name: Yagi) was estimated at P2.2 billion, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said. In a bulletin posted on Monday, the DA said some 59,669 farmers and fisherfolk were affected by the storm.

Crop losses totaled 51,728 metric tons (MT) across 37,471 hectares of farmland.

More than half of damage was to the rice crop, which accounted for 48.9% of the total.

Rice losses amounted to 48,646 MT, valued at P1.11 billion, with the damage spanning 34,935 hectares.

Most of the damaged rice was in the reproductive and maturing stages, the DA said.

The most affected provinces were Camarines Sur, Pampanga, Bulacan, Camarines Norte, and Nueva Ecija.

Damage to irrigation facilities was tallied at P1.08 billion, or 47.9% of the overall damage.

“Most of the damaged irrigation facilities are National Irrigation Systems or Communal Irrigation Systems,” it said.

The DA valued corn losses at P46.22 million, with volume estimated at 2,434 MT.

Damage to high-value crops was P26.6 million, including lowland vegetables and bananas.

It added that damage to cassava crops was P1.98 million with volume lost at 101 MT. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/09/620261/farm-damage-from-enteng-hits-p2-2-billion/>

**REMATE:**

## **Kapayapaan at pagkakaisa susi sa pag-unlad ng sektor ng pagsasaka – ex-DAR exec**

September 9, 2024 18:51



MANILA, Philippines – NILINAW ni dating Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Secretary Bernie Cruz na wala siyang intensyon na maupo bilang party representative

ng Magsasaka Party list o maging nominado nito taliwas sa lumabas sa ilang pahayagan.

Sa interbyu kay Cruz, dating DAR Secretary at PCA Administrator, sinabi nito na kahit wala umano siya sa puwesto sa kasalukuyan ang mahalaga sa kanya ay matulungan ang mga magsasaka na mai-angat ang kabuhayan nito na matagal na panahon nyang pinagsilbihan kahit noong student leader activist pa siya sa Kolehiyo.

Sinabi ni Cruz na wala siyang balak maging party representative nito (Magsasaka Party list) dahil ang tanging hangarin lamang nya sa kasalukuyan ay makatulong sa sektor ng mga magsasaka.

Ayon sa dating Secretary, ginawa nya ang pahayag makaraang maiulat sa ilang pahayagan na posibleng umanong makaupo ang mga naglingkod na gabinete ni dating Pangulong Rodrigo



Duterte (kabilang si dating Sec. Bernie Cruz) bilang party list representative kapag hindi maiayos ang gusot sa loob ng Magsasaka party list dahil sa agawan sa liderato ng lider nito.

“Mahalaga sa akin sa ngayon ay matulungan ang mga magsasaka upang matiyak natin ang food security sa bansa,” ayon pa kay Cruz.

Kaugnay nito, sinabi din ni Cruz na kahit kailan ay hindi umano siya nasangkot sa katiwalian at hindi nagkaroon ng ano mang kaso na may kaugnayan dito.

“Hindi ako nasangkot sa ano mang kaso ng katiwalian,” paliwanag pa ni Cruz.

Nauna rito, dalawang taon na ang nakaraan nagsimula ang isang internal dispute sa Magsasaka Party list noong taong 2022 na pinangungunahan ng grupo ni Atty. Argel Cabatbat at Soliman Villamin Jr. na nagtunggali para sa National Chairperson ng naturang grupo.

Idinagdag pa ng dating DAR Secretary na makakamit lamang ang pag-unlad ng sektor ng agrikultura kung magkakaisa ang mga lider ng mga magsasaka. *Santi Celario*

<https://remate.ph/kapayapaan-at-pagkakaisa-susi-sa-pag-unlad-ng-sektor-ng-pagsasaka-ex-dar-exec/>

# **DA to expand controlled testing of ASF vaccine**

**By Janine Alexis Miguel**

**September 10, 2024**

AGRICULTURE chief Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has ordered nationwide testing of an African swine fever (ASF) vaccine to ensure stable supply of pork throughout the country.

The Department of Agriculture said Monday that it would expand controlled ASF vaccinations to other areas in Luzon as well as in regions designated as "red zones" in the Visayas and Mindanao.

"We will cast a wider net to include La Union, Quezon, Mindoro, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Cebu in the Bureau of Animal Industry's (BAI) controlled testing of the initial 150,000 doses of ASF vaccines we have imported from Vietnam," Tiu Laurel said.

Controlled testing is currently being done in Lobo, Batangas, where higher cases of the animal disease have been recorded. The province has been identified as ground zero for the largest ASF outbreak since the monsoon season began.

The AVAC Live vaccines are being provided free of charge to hog farmers to support their efforts in combating the disease.

Tiu Laurel said commercial pig farms located in areas with numerous infections would also receive ASF vaccines to safeguard stocks from the disease.

"Our goal is to ensure a steady supply of pork in the market and stabilize prices," he said.

The government has allocated P300 million for the procurement of approximately 600,000 doses of the ASF vaccine from Vietnam, plus an additional P50 million for related inoculation costs.

As of September 6, the number of provinces with active cases of ASF had slightly fallen to 31 from 32 the previous month, while the number of affected barangays had risen to 472 from 458 in August, BAI data showed.

Since the first outbreak in 2019, which led to the culling of more than 300,000 pigs, the Philippine hog industry has struggled to recover from its severe impact.

"The high mortality rate of ASF has forced many small-scale pig farms to cease operations to avoid substantial losses," the Agriculture Department said.

In response to the outbreak, the government has increased indemnification for diseased pigs surrendered for culling, raising the compensation ceiling to P12,000 each for breeders from the previous maximum of P5,000.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/10/business/top-business/da-to-expand-controlled-testing-of-asf-vaccine/1970239>

# **DBM releases P21-B excise tax take from tobacco to LGUs**

Reine Juvierre S. Alberto  
September 10, 2024

THE Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has released P21 billion in excise tax collections from tobacco and cigarettes to local government unit (LGUs) on August 30.

Budget Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman approved the issuance of a Special Allotment Release Order (Saro) amounting to P21 billion to the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr), which shall release the funding to the beneficiary LGUs.

Based on DBM's Local Budget Memorandum No. 91, 15 percent of the collection from excise taxes on locally manufactured Virginia-type cigarettes, not exceeding P17 billion, will be allocated to the provinces pro-rata according to the volume of production.

The bulk or 63.27 percent of the P17-billion fund will be allocated to Ilocos Sur with P10.756 billion; followed by Ilocos Norte with P2.804 billion; Abra, P1.919 billion; and La Union, P1.521 billion.

Funds must be utilized to advance the self-reliance of tobacco farmers through cooperative projects increasing productivity, development of alternative farming systems and creation of agro-industrial projects.

It could also be used for infrastructure projects such as farm-to-market roads, programs and projects promoting tourism and financial assistance for tobacco farmers displaced or ceased to produce tobacco.

Moreover, 5 percent of the revenues collected from excise taxes on tobacco products, not exceeding P4 billion, will be disbursed to provinces producing burley and native tobacco in accordance with the volume of tobacco leaf production.

Of the 16 beneficiary provinces, Isabela will receive the highest allotment of P1.768 billion; followed by Misamis Oriental with P562.314 million; Ilocos Sur, P560.247 million; and Pangasinan, P483.658 million.

Abra, Ifugao, Ilocos Norte, La Union, Cagayan, Nueva Vizcaya, Tarlac, Zamboanga Sibugay, North Cotabato, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur and Maguindanao will also be given their shares.

The funds shall be exclusively used for programs that will provide inputs, training and other support for tobacco farmers who shift to the production of other agricultural products; financial support for tobacco farmers; assist farmers in planting alternative crops; tourism-promoting livelihood programs; and infrastructure and agro-industrial projects.

Currently, the DBM is processing the necessary approvals to issue the corresponding Notices of Cash Allocation (NCAs) and Advices of NCA Issued (ANCAIs) to Authorized Government Servicing Banks (AGSBs) and to the Treasury.

Republic Act (RA) No. 11346 provides special financial support to beneficiary provinces producing Virginia tobacco while RA No. 8240 allocates funding for provinces producing burley and native tobacco.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/10/dbm-releases-p21-b-excise-tax-take-from-tobacco-to-lgus/>

# Tuna Turnaround

BusinessMirror  
September 9, 2024



Fish port workers haul the day's tuna catch for processing inside the GenSan City Fishport Complex. During the 24th National Tuna Congress and Trade Exhibit, Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. underscored the tuna industry's crucial role in generating investments, creating jobs, and ensuring food security. He addressed challenges such as climate change, overfishing, and illegal fishing practices, and highlighted key initiatives like the National Tuna Management Plan to bolster the industry's resilience.

The Philippines is a leading global tuna producer in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, with tuna being the top export commodity, accounting for an average of 479,700 metric tons—11 percent of the country's total fisheries production.

The average annual tuna export over the past five years is approximately 107,608 metric tons.

Image credits: [Bernard Testa](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/09/tuna-turnaround/>

# **FTA with South Korea vital for keeping PHL's banana market**

Andrea E. San Juan  
September 9, 2024

AROUND 740,000 Filipinos employed in the banana industry could be affected if the Philippines fails to capture the \$280-million market share of bananas in South Korea, according to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

“In terms of jobs if you will look at the banana industry alone, we’re protecting here 744,000 jobs in that particular industry covered—those directly employed, indirectly employed,” DTI Undersecretary Allan B. Gepty said at a recent Senate hearing.

“So you can just imagine if they will lose the market share in South Korea which is equivalent to \$280 million, what is the impact of that? That alone is huge,” Gepty added, speaking partly in Filipino.

The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations held the hearing for the concurrence in the ratification of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the Philippines and South Korea.

The Trade undersecretary said the Philippines’s market share of bananas in South Korea used to be at around 98 to 99 percent. Now, Gepty said it plunged to 69 percent while Vietnam’s market share of bananas in South Korea went up to 15 percent from zero.

“So you can just imagine the threat to our banana industry, a major product. So if we don’t pursue this [FTA], the banana industry, farmers will suffer,” said Gepty.

Once the free trade deal with South Korea takes effect, Philippine bananas would have to wait five years before enjoying zero tariffs in the South Korean market.

For his part, Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA) and Dole Philippines consultant Melquiades L. Hernandez said the tariffs with South Korea have been one of the issues hounding the Philippine banana industry.

“If we are not able to finalize this FTA with Korea, we are very afraid that we will lose entirely the Korean market which is our third biggest market next to China and Japan,” Hernandez said.

For his part, Trade Undersecretary Ceferino S. Rodolfo said the Philippines was able to persuade Korea to shorten—from 10 years to just five—the period for reducing the tariffs for bananas from 30 percent to zero.

Meanwhile, as one of the “complementary measures” to the free trade deal, Rodolfo said the Board of Investments (BOI) has recently issued a policy that would “recognize rehabilitation of plantations as being registrable for incentives.”

Before, he explained, once a piece of land has been registered for incentives, it can no longer be listed anew for further perks. “But now we’re saying that’s dynamic, we are not talking about the land, but the other factors of production that you need to produce the bananas,” he said.

The BOI indicated this policy in Memorandum Circular No. 2024-003.

The policy noted: “An existing enterprise that shall engage in: iii. Rehabilitation of plantation provided that application for registration must be accompanied by a certification of being affected by a transboundary pest/disease from any of the following: (a) Department of Agriculture; or (b) Subject to such other proof as may be required by the Board from the local government units and other similar authorities such as, but not limited to, accredited or recognized industry association, or professional or technical experts.”

Hernandez, for his part, noted that apart from the tariffs of Philippine bananas to South Korea, the banana sector is also facing the Panama disease scourge, which infects banana plants.

“It’s a combination of all of these. The disease is a big issue in our industry; the high cost of production because of the high prices of farm inputs in order to address the



panama disease is an issue; the availability of land is an issue and one of the biggest issues that we have in the banana industry is the tariffs with Korea,” he noted.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/09/fta-with-south-korea-vital-for-keeping-phls-banana-market/>