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MANILA BULLETIN:

P42-kilo rice makes Romualdez smile, but prices seen to go down further

BY [ELLSON QUISMORIO](#)

Sep 11, 2024 07:14 PM

AT A GLANCE

- House Speaker Martin Romualdez is happy to see firsthand the lowered prices of rice in the local market, but the best is yet to come for Filipino consumers as the "ber" months go by.



House Speaker Martin Romualdez (Speaker's office)

House Speaker Martin Romualdez is happy to see firsthand the lowered prices of rice in the local market, but the best is yet to come for Filipino consumers as the "ber" months go by.

On Wednesday, Sept. 11, Romualdez visited Guadalupe Market in Makati, as well as the Farmers' Market and Nepa Q-Mart in Quezon City upon the invitation of the Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders' Movement (PRISM), a large organization of rice traders; the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI); and the Department of Agriculture.

Accompanying the House leader was ACT-CIS Party-list Rep. Erwin Tulfo, the deputy majority leader for communications.

Romualdez, who had earned the moniker "Mr. Rice", attributed the drop in rice prices to the effective interventions made by the Marcos administration to reduce the costs of the Filipino staple, and to stabilize the food supply and protect consumers from price surges.

"Nakita natin may P45 kada kilo, meron ding P42 for broken rice, yung well-milled P45. At yun talaga ang gusto nating makita, na pababa ng pababa (ang presyo ng bigas)," said Speaker. Retail prices of well-milled rice reached north of P50 earlier this year.

(We saw retail prices of P45 per kilo, there was also P42 for broken rice, well-milled was P45. And that's what we really wanted to see, to see it fall further.)

“On behalf of the House of Representatives, we welcome this positive development. This is truly in line with the Marcos administration’s commitment to ensuring that food, particularly rice, remains affordable and accessible for all Filipinos,” added the Leyte 1st district congressman.

He expressed hopes the trend will continue to bring much-needed relief to Filipino families, particularly in the coming Christmas season.

“Yung nakita po namin dito na factor, yung pagbaba po ng taripa from 35 percent to 15 percent. So natutuwa po yung mga retailers natin saka yung mga consumers natin,” said PRISM’s Orly Manuntag who cited Executive Order (EO) No. 62 that President Marcos signed last June 20. The directive effectively reduced tariff on imported rice.

P38-kilo rice soon?

Buoyed by the projection of rice retailers, Tulfo expressed confidence that rice will get even cheaper later this year.

“Parating pa lang yung mga [imported] bigas ngayon. So asahan daw by end of September buong Metro Manila na ay may mga bigas na na mura,” Tulfo said.

(The rice imports are just about to arrive. So they said that by the end of September, the entirety of Metro Manila will have cheap rice.)

“Tapos sa mga probinsya, by October first week meron na rin...nangako ang Grecon (Grains Retailers Confederation of the Philippines) na maaaring bumaba pa ito, hopefully by December, by end of this year, ay umabot pa raw ng P38, P39,” he added.

(By the first week of October, the provinces will have theirs...Grecon promised that rice prices will further drop to P38 or P39, hopefully by December, by end of this year.)

In addition President Marcos' decisive action on rice tariff, Romualdez also cited the initiatives of the House, which included collaboration with rice traders, as a factor in the price skid of the staple food.

“Together with PRISM and other stakeholders, we have been actively working to stop rice hoarding and price manipulation. I would like to commend the rice traders who have responded to our call to make rice affordable and available for everyone,” the Speaker said.

It could be recalled that Romualdez led fact-finding missions to inspect rice warehouses in Bulacan, where instances of hoarding were discovered. These investigations, the Speaker noted, have been crucial in bringing unscrupulous traders to light and ensuring that rice stocks are released to the market.

“The Marcos administration is committed to implementing long-term solutions, such as increasing domestic rice production, improving import regulations, and penalizing those involved in illegal trade practices,” said the House chief.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/11/p42-kilo-rice-makes-romualdez-smile-but-prices-seen-to-go-down-further>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA seizes P21-M worth of 'smuggled' carrots, yellow onions at Port of Subic

BY [AARON RECUENCO](#)

Sep 11, 2024 05:52 PM

Personnel of the Department of Agriculture (DA) seized around P21 million worth of smuggled fresh carrots and yellow onions in a raid on the Port of Subic.

Citing a report from the ground, DA Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said the smuggled agricultural products were discovered in five container cans that were imported from China.

The container vans, however, were intercepted by DA personnel, through the Bureau of Plant Industry- Plant Quarantine Service at the Port of Subic and despite the declaration that the cargo were frozen fish egg balls, the inspection revealed a substantial quantity of fresh vegetables: 58 metric tons of carrots and 86 metric tons of yellow onions.

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Import regulations mandate that fresh vegetables and other agricultural food products require Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearances (SPSIC) issued by the BPI.

For processed food items, like the declared commodity, frozen fish egg balls importers are required to secure permits from the Food and Drug Administration.

“Clearly, these are smuggled goods that rob our government of tariff revenue, pose a risk to public health, and undermine the livelihood of our vegetable farmers,” said Laurel.

BPI Director Gerald Glenn Panganiban said that samples from the seized vegetables will be tested to determine their suitability for human consumption. The tests will check for pesticide residues, heavy metals, and microbiological contaminants.

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Any imported agricultural products that fail these tests will be condemned and destroyed.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/11/da-seizes-p21-m-worth-of-smuggled-carrots-yellow-onions-at-port-of-subic>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Marcos aids farmers, fisherfolk in Ilocos Norte

BY [BETHEENA UNITE](#)

Sep 11, 2024 03:55 PM

Close to P158-million of assistance were given to farmers and fisherfolk in Ilocos Norte to boost agriculture production in the province.



President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. leads the distribution of assistance to farmers and fisherfolk in Ilocos Norte on Sept. 11, 2024. (Noel Pabalate)

President Marcos led the distribution of P157.9 million worth of agricultural support to farmers, fisherfolk, and livestock raisers in Batac City on Wednesday, Sept. 11, the same day the province commemorated the 107th birth anniversary of former president Ferdinand Marcos Sr.

Interventions such as agri-fishery machineries, seeds, fertilizers, fuel subsidies and solar-powered irrigation systems were turned over to around 1,000 farmers, fishermen, and livestock raisers from different associations in the province.

According to Marcos, the project led by the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the provincial government of Ilocos Norte aims to elevate local agri-fishery production, foster sustainable recovery from past calamities in the region.

Marcos assured farmers and fisherfolk in the province that the DA, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), and Department of

the Interior and Local Government (DILG) are on top of the situation they are facing in the agriculture sector.

“Every step that we take comes under the unity that we have forged between the different agencies of our government. Lahat po ay magkasama (Everyone will be included),” the President said.

During his visit in the province, Marcos also led the “Ayuda sa Kapos ang Kita Program (AKAP)” payout in Batac City.

AKAP is aimed at helping needy Filipinos, including the farmers and fisherfolk affected by the El Niño phenomenon in the province.

“Dahil nga sa El Niño, wala tayong nakitang ulan ng anim na buwan. At ito ay kinikilala ng inyong pamahalaan na talagang kailangan tulungan ang mga iba’t-iba na nangangailangan dahil nasira ang tanim at walang huli sa palaisdaan (Because of El Niño, we did not have enough rain for six months. The government acknowledges that we need to extend help to those who were affected),” Marcos said.

“Lahat po ‘yan ay nakita po namin at kaya’t nandito po kami para dagdagan ang kaunting tulong na ibinibigay ng iba’t-ibang ahensya. At ito po ay kasama na sa celebration ng birthday ng aking ama, ang dating Pangulo na si President Ferdinand Edralin Marcos (We saw all of that and that is why we are here to add the assistance given by different agencies. And this is part of the celebration of my father's birthday),” he added.

Sept. 11 was declared a special non-working day by the President in Ilocos Norte to commemorate the 107th birthday of his father.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/11/marcos-aids-farmers-fisherfolk-in-ilocos-norte>

MANILA BULLETIN:

NEDA chief: 2024 Philippine economic growth on track despite strong typhoons

BY [BEN ARNOLD DE VERA](#)

Sep 11, 2024 11:59 AM

Despite the string of strong typhoons that battered economically-productive parts of the Philippines so far in the third quarter, the country's chief economist still expects to hit the targeted economic expansion for 2024.

"We're confident we'll achieve our six- to seven-percent growth target this year despite the recent typhoons," National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan told *Manila Bulletin* on Wednesday, Sept. 11. Real gross domestic product (GDP) grew by an average of six percent in the first half of the year.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) earlier reported that the combo of super-typhoon "Carina" and southwest monsoon or "habagat" last July inflicted P4.73 billion in damage to the agriculture sector.

The agricultural losses caused by tropical storm "Enteng" early this month, meanwhile, amounted to P2.26 billion so far, according to the DA.

For Balisacan, "the recent fall in inflation and policy rates and the robust labor market are expected to buoy domestic demand."

Headline inflation fell to a seven-month low of 3.3 percent in August as food price hikes, especially of Filipino staple rice, eased.

As inflation returns to the range deemed manageable and conducive to economic growth, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) started its easing cycle and cut the key interest rate by 25 basis points (bps) to 6.25 percent last month.

The jobless rate declined to 4.7 percent in July from 4.9 percent a year ago, although higher than June's record-low 3.1 percent.

In a presentation at the 22nd International CEO Conference last Tuesday, Sept. 10, World Bank lead economist for Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand Gonzalo Varela said the threat of climate change is becoming a reality in the country.

Varela told members of the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) that the Philippines should be able to adapt to climate change by putting in place shared "resilient infrastructure," something that Balisacan said the government was already doing.

"Resiliency is one of the considerations or standards for our 'Build Better More' infrastructure program," Balisacan said in a text message.

The NEDA chief was referring to the rollout of 186 infrastructure flagship projects in the medium-to long-term, with the government intending to spend P1.47 trillion, equivalent to 5.6 percent of GDP, on hard infra this year.

Varela noted that the Philippines is No. 1 in disaster risk globally and fourth-most affected by weather events, such that 82.7 percent of Filipinos are exposed and 69.1 percent vulnerable to climate change impacts, citing the World Bank's Philippines Climate Change Development Report in 2023.

World Bank estimates showed that extreme weather and rising temperatures would slash the Philippines' real GDP by four percent under a low to moderate climate scenario, and as much as 11 percent under a more severe climate scenario.

The private sector is also badly affected by weather risks, as Varela pointed out that most firms in the country are exposed to severe flooding, while businesses mainly in western Luzon island face elevated risks of drought.

It did not help that the flood risk in Metro Manila, the country's main business and economic hub, has risen by 40 percent during the last six decades, Varela added.

Citing that companies' decisions as well as performance get affected by weather risks, Varela said both manufacturers and services firms are facing bigger chances of relocation from flood-prone areas to other parts of the country with reduced precipitation.

"Increased precipitation reduces productivity, sales and investment for services firms," Varela noted.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/11/neda-chief-2024-philippine-economic-growth-on-track-despite-strong-typhoons>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Marcos Jr. honors father on 107th birthday

[Helen Flores](#) - The Philippine Star

September 12, 2024 | 12:00am



President Marcos speaks on the 107th birth anniversary of his father and namesake at the Immaculate Conception Parish in Batac, Ilocos Norte yesterday.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Calling him his “guiding force” and “steady voice of reason,” President Marcos honored his late father, former president Ferdinand Marcos Sr. in the latter’s 107th birth anniversary yesterday.

“Not a day goes by where I don’t think about my father. His wisdom remains a guiding force, a steady voice of reason reminding me of the principles that should lead our nation forward,” the President said in a post on Facebook.

“Happy birthday, Dad! We continue to celebrate you and honor your lasting legacy,” he added.

In a separate Facebook post, the President urged Filipinos to pay tribute to his father’s memory by reflecting on his legacy and “meaningful” service to the nation.

“He is a symbol of hope, a great innovator and a fervent patriot. Indeed, he was a Renaissance man whose thoughts and ideas were far ahead of his time,” he said.

The President, together with First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos and their sons, Ilocos Norte 1st District Rep. Sandro Marcos, Simon and Vincent, attended a thanksgiving mass at the Immaculate Conception Parish in Batac City, Ilocos Norte before leading a wreath-laying ceremony at the Marcos Monument, also located in Batac.

Marcos' sister Sen. Imee Marcos and other family members also joined the event.

In his brief remarks after the mass, the President said his father's 107th birthday is meaningful for their family.

"And for us, the Marcos family, that's always a significant number because seven is the lucky number of my father," he said.

Marcos also graced the "Natnateng cook-off showdown," a culinary event that showcases various signature vegetable dishes in the province of Ilocos Norte as part of the Marcos Day celebration.

Sept. 11 was declared a special non-working day in Ilocos Norte for the commemoration of the birth anniversary of the late former president.

As part of the Marcos Day celebration, the President distributed ambulances in Paoay town and assistance from the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Ayuda sa Kapos ang Kita Program or AKAP program in Batac and Laoag.

"We should not only celebrate his birthday with festivities, but rather with the spirit of generosity and bayanihan, through giving back to our people," Marcos wrote on Facebook.

Marcos Sr. was born on Sept. 11, 1917 in Sarrat, Ilocos Norte.

He was elected president in 1965.

He placed the Philippines under martial law on Sept. 21, 1972 through Proclamation 1081 until Jan. 17, 1981 – a period that was marked with human rights abuses.

He died in exile in Hawaii on Sept. 28, 1989 at the age of 72.

In 1993, the government allowed Marcos Sr.'s widow Imelda Marcos to bring his body to the Philippines, but refused her demand for a hero's burial.

Former president Rodrigo Duterte allowed the burial of the late dictator at the Libingan ng mga Bayani in 2016 amid strong opposition from martial law victims and human rights defenders.

The late strongman's body had been interred in a glass crypt in the Marcos Museum and Mausoleum in Batac City for years.

In an interview in September 2022, Marcos said he is not bothered being called the “son of the dictator” even as he defended his father’s imposition of martial law in 1972, saying it was necessary to prevent rising disorder caused by communist and separatist rebellions at the time.

P157.9 million aid

The Marcos administration yesterday provided P157.9 million worth of assistance to farmers and fisherfolk in Ilocos Norte to help them recover from previous calamities and to increase the production of the agriculture sector.

Marcos led the distribution of farm implements like seeds, tractors, fertilizers, fishery paraphernalia, fuel subsidies and solar-powered irrigation system to some 1,000 farmers, fishermen and livestock raisers from various groups in the province.

The event was part of the celebration of the 107th birth anniversary of Marcos’ late father and namesake in Batac City.

“Because of El Niño, we did not experience rain for six months. Your government recognizes the need to help the needy because crops were destroyed and there was no catch in the fish ponds,” he added.

Marcos assured the beneficiaries that his administration is working to achieve the targets of the agriculture sector.

“This assistance is part of our bigger goal to recognize your diligence and sacrifices for Ilocos and for the entire country,” he said.

Martial law museum still a go – CHR

Meanwhile, the martial law museum is still a go under the current administration.

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) gave this assurance to the Senate during its budget deliberations yesterday.

“Just a curious question: is Malacañang supportive of this?” Senate President Pro Tempore Jinggoy Estrada asked Human Rights Violations Victims’ Memorial Commission (HRVVMC) executive director Carmelo Crisanto.

“The Palace expresses its support through the Department of Budget and Management, and I am here to say that during the administration of President Bongbong Marcos, we have never received any instruction to stop what we’re doing,” Crisanto said.

He added that the commission, an attached agency of the CHR, has received its trust receipts as part of its annual funding, as well as increases in its budget under the second Marcos administration.

Crisanto said he was able to talk to Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin, who asked about the delays in the museum.

The museum is 20 months delayed because of the need to relocate the community maintenance office of the University of the Philippines Diliman, which granted free use of its 1.4-hectare land along C.P. Garcia Avenue.

The museum will finish construction in 18 months once the land is cleared, according to Crisanto.

Republic Act 10368, or the Human Rights Victims Reparation and Recognition Act, which created the HRVVMC, states that a martial law museum shall be created with an annual budget of no less than P500 million sourced from the accrued interests on the P10-billion Marcos ill-gotten wealth.

The museum, which will memorialize the atrocities of the Marcos dictatorship, will be called Freedom Memorial Museum. – **Alexis Romero, Marc Jayson Cayabyab**

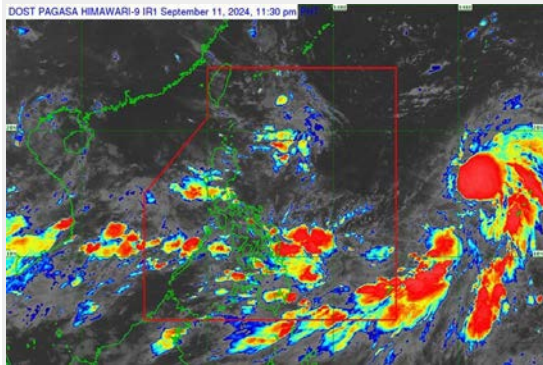
<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/09/12/2384665/marcos-jr-honors-father-107th-birthday>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Tropical cyclone enters PAR tomorrow

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

September 12, 2024 | 12:00am



Ferdie (international name Bebinca) is expected to intensify into a severe tropical storm in the next 24 hours and may reach typhoon category today.

PAGASA

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines' sixth tropical cyclone this year is expected to enter the country's area of responsibility tomorrow, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

Ferdie (international name Bebinca) is expected to intensify into a severe tropical storm in the next 24 hours and may reach typhoon category today.

“This tropical cyclone is expected to exit the country on Saturday morning. It will remain far from the Philippine landmass,” the state weather bureau said yesterday.

Eastern Visayas, Bicol and Caraga are already experiencing cloudy skies and rains, PAGASA weather specialist Obet Badrina said at a briefing.

“There is a small chance that the cyclone will make landfall in the country, but it will enhance the southwest monsoon as it moves northwestward,” he said. The enhanced southwest monsoon will also bring rains to Central Luzon, Metro Manila, Calabarzon and Mimaropa, Badrina noted.

Heavy rains are expected in the northern and western portions of Mindanao, PAGASA said.

Prepare for Ferdie

Farmers and fisherfolk must prepare for Ferdie, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said yesterday.

Mature crops should be harvested and seed reserves must be secured, the agency noted.

“Relocate farm machinery, equipment and other farm tools to higher ground, secure sufficient feeds and water for relocated animals and clear drainage in irrigation and rice paddies from obstructions to prevent flooding and promote fast water drainage,” the DA recommended.

Philippines tops World Risk Index for 3rd year

The Philippines remains at the top of the list of countries most exposed and vulnerable to disasters, based on the 2024 World Risk Index.

For the third consecutive year, the country’s disaster risk remains “very high,” scoring 39.99 in exposure and 55.03 in vulnerability, or a geometric mean of 46.91 out of 100.

In 2023, the Philippines scored 46.86 and 46.82 in 2022. Scores above 12.89 are classified as very high.

Citing 2020’s Super Typhoon Rolly (international name Goni) at the height of the pandemic, the report said destroyed homes, overcrowded evacuation centers and COVID-19 cases led to a dramatic increase in humanitarian needs and negatively impacted the population’s mental health.

“The Philippines is home to many low-income families, many of whom live in vulnerable coastal areas. The coronavirus pandemic exacerbated their vulnerability. As many evacuation centers were overcrowded and compliance with social distancing measures was difficult to maintain, the pandemic increased the risk to people affected by the typhoon,” researchers said. Other countries with high disaster risk were Indonesia (41.13), India (40.96) and Colombia (37.81), while the lowest were Monaco (0.18), Andorra (0.28) and San Marino (0.35).

“Exposure represents the extent to which populations are exposed to and burdened by the impacts of earthquakes, tsunamis, coastal and riverine floodings, cyclones, droughts and sea level rise,” the index explained.

“Vulnerability maps the societal domain and is composed of three dimensions: susceptibility, coping, adaptation,” it added.

Multiple crises such as natural events, pandemics, wars and conflicts “are increasingly overlapping and amplifying each other,” the report noted.

The latest index, which ranked 193 countries and territories, was released by the Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict at the Ruhr-University Bochum in Germany.

School repair funds

Twelve public schools in disaster-prone areas will each receive P500,000 for the rehabilitation and repair of classrooms, under an agreement between the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Land Bank of the Philippines.

Beneficiaries are schools with less than four classrooms, usually makeshift and have no electricity or funds for repairs or new construction. An additional P1 million has been provided by Land Bank’s Leasing and Finance Corp. and Resources and Development Corp.

Under the agreement, schools division offices handling the 12 schools will oversee adherence to government standards and facilitate learning continuity during repairs.

School heads will manage documentation and updates, while schools division engineers will coordinate with Land Bank’s technical team for the repair activities.

Education Secretary Sonny Angara and Land Bank president Lynette Ortiz signed the two-year agreement.

Ortiz said Land Bank plans to connect DepEd with other banks to include the agency’s Adopt-a-School program as part of their corporate social responsibility programs.

From 2020 to 2022, the DepEd targeted to repair 260 schools in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, with a budget of P4.4 billion.

As of February 2023, 73 sites have been completed while construction is ongoing in 152 sites. Other sites are pending, under procurement or reverted. – **Janvic Mateo, Neil Jayson Servallos**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/09/12/2384685/tropical-cyclone-enters-par-tomorrow>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Palm oil industry stakeholders optimistic on growth prospects

The Philippine Star

September 12, 2024 | 12:00am



At the recently concluded National Palm Oil Congress in Davao City, Ares Merchants Philippines Inc. (AMPI), a leading supplier of vegetable oils, noted significant improvements in local palm oil production and indicated the possibility of further growth.

BusinessWorld / File

MANILA, Philippines — The local palm oil industry holds bright prospects for growth especially in the European Union (EU) market, leading players said.

At the recently concluded National Palm Oil Congress in Davao City, Ares Merchants Philippines Inc. (AMPI), a leading supplier of vegetable oils, noted significant improvements in local palm oil production and indicated the possibility of further growth.

“Strong global demand for our locally produced coconut oil in the EU has created a gap in the local vegetable oil market. Palm olein is the most economical substitute,” said AMPI managing director Jose Leonardo Tanada.

He also expressed optimism about the industry’s expansion, citing an annual increase of 2,500 to 5,000 hectares in palm oil cultivation. “This growth will help address the underutilized capacity of our palm oil manufacturers.”

According to the Department of Agriculture's Philippine Palm Oil Industry Roadmap 2024-2033, production is on the rise.

The area planted with palm oil has grown from around 53,000 hectares in 2022 to approximately 63,000 hectares in 2023. Region XII leads in production with 33 percent of total area, followed by the Caraga Region with 27 percent.

Tanada emphasized the need for ongoing government support to sustain industry growth until farmers can achieve profitability. "Under optimal conditions, palm oil plantations start producing fruit after three to four years and continue for 25 years. The PCA and private entities should provide financial support during this gestation period," he explained.

He also highlighted the importance of balancing domestic production with palm oil imports. Despite increased local production, the Philippines remains a significant importer relative to its output.

"Encouraging local production creates jobs for Filipinos, but imports are crucial to prevent hoarding and mitigate potential inflationary issues for the country."

Industry experts have identified about one million hectares available for palm oil cultivation, with 98 percent located in Mindanao. Caraga alone holds approximately 40 percent of the total prospective area for palm oil production. The Philippines currently faces a surplus in milling capacity, with current production at only around 180 metric tons per hour compared to the total capacity of 275 metric tons per hour.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/09/12/2384524/palm-oil-industry-stakeholders-optimistic-growth-prospects>

Food



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

September 12, 2024 | 12:00am

Having dispatched his pesky Vice President (you know her) and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary BenHur Abalos and the Philippine National Police having executed the stunning arrest of two of the country's most notorious fugitives, Alice Guo (who former PNP chief Panfilo Lacson says is a non-Filipino and a Chinese spy) and pastor Apollo Quiboloy (the son of god, of course), President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is back focusing on this old love – agriculture.

Agriculture is producing food to feed the hungry. There are 15 million hungry Filipinos in my estimate. The number of malnourished children is more than seven million. Every day, 95 of our kids, or nearly 35,000 a year, die due to malnutrition. That's genocide.

Yesterday, Sept. 11, was the 107th birth anniversary of the late Ferdinand Edralin Marcos Sr. (the Father of the Green Revolution). Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. flew by helicopter to Subic to catch smugglers (of onions, carrots and tobacco). On Friday, Sept. 13, BBM's 67th birthday, the President flies to Guimba, Nueva Ecija with Tiu Laurel to meet with farmers.

On Tuesday, the Manila Overseas Press Club has a luncheon (11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.) forum with Agriculture Secretary Tiu Laurel at the Fairmont Hotel ballroom. Major conglomerates and senior newsmen have booked tables to hear the DA chief elaborate on his Agriculture Road Map and why agriculture is a good bet to invest in. An open forum follows his presentation/speech.

“Our economy continues to grow,” gloats Sec Kiko. However, he hastens to add, “Agriculture is not growing as fast as the entire economy. We are going down and down.” Agriculture’s share of the economy (or its share of the Gross Domestic Product or GDP), has been falling, from 10.4 percent in 2016 to 8.6 percent in 2023, its lowest ever.

That 1.8-percentage loss (10.4 less 8.6) is equivalent to P500 billion a year in lost production or to three years of \$3 billion per year worth of rice imports. Our agricultural trade deficit (the amount of food we export minus the food we import) is scandalously high, P1.14 trillion – enough money to irrigate all the non-irrigated farm lands and solve, almost overnight, our severe rice shortage. Irrigation doubles or triples average palay yield per hectare of 3.8 tons. If agriculture had kept its share of GDP of 10 percent, we would not be needing rice imports, food prices would not go through the roof, inflation would not rage and interest rates would not have tripled in less than three years.

Among government’s breathtaking panoply of choices amid economic challenges, high interest rates are the favorite panacea of the Bangko Sentral to control inflation. That cure-all has failed. Dismally.

Filipinos continue to suffer from high prices and high interest rates. And every year, in the past two years, two million more Filipinos joined the ranks of the poor. The bottom 30 percent of Filipinos suffer from inflation (or the rapid rise in prices) more than the upper 70 percent.

In August 2024, the average inflation rate for all Filipinos was just 3.3 percent. For the same period, the inflation rate for the bottom 30 percent was 4.7 percent, 42 percent higher than the national average. In regimes of high food prices, high inflation rates and high interest rates, the poor suffer the most – and devastatingly.

What happens when people don’t have enough to eat? They become stupid.

No food translates into no brain growth. When you produce masses with little or barren brains, you produce masses of stupid voters. And stupid voters, in turn, elect in high volume, officials like that brat who claims she is THE designated survivor (of what, famine?) and that farm girl who does not even know her real name (Guo Hua Ping) but managed to get herself elected a small town mayor and become a big time POGO operator.

And since dynastic families are well endowed (economically), are well fed and well-nourished, you get a Congress 70 percent of whose members are dynasts.

What about the BSP? Well, the BSP people are the best educated and the best paid of our civil servants. They are not stupid. They are brilliant.

But sometimes, they eat the wrong kind of food and end up doing stupid things. Like printing a plastic ID every Filipino must have, but without a signature. Yet, BSP itself mandates banks to demand of their clients and depositors two IDs, both of which must have a valid signature. You cannot do business with a bank without a signature. You cannot withdraw your money without a signature. In fact, the bank teller won't recognize you as a human being if you don't have a signature. But a national ID? Well, no signature needed.

No wonder during the Sept. 9 hearing of the Senate committee on women, ex-mayor Guo was shown her signature produced by the NBI and she refused to acknowledge it. In local politics and in businesses like POGO, no signatures are needed. That may perhaps explain the BSP's no-signature-is-necessary IDs.

In the administration's P6.352-trillion proposed national budget, the top three priority expenditure items are: 1) infrastructure development (P900 billion in public works, P181 billion in transportation); 2) human capital development (P977.6 billion for education and training) and 3) sustainable agriculture and food security (P211.3 billion for DA and its attached agencies). Sec Kiko wanted a P500-billion DA budget but was given less than half by the budget department.

Among countries with a huge population, the Philippines provides among the lowest support to its farmers, per capita, just \$2,563. The major rice producing countries provide much more to their farmers, per capita: Vietnam \$4,812; Thailand \$5,919; India \$6,157 and China \$13,771.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/09/12/2384607/food>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

P21 million smuggled carrots, onions seized in Subic

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

September 12, 2024 | 12:00am



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the smuggled vegetables were found inside five shipping containers that arrived in the country on board a Chinese vessel last month.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Up to 144 tons of smuggled carrots and onions valued at P21 million were seized yesterday at the port of Subic in Zambales.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the smuggled vegetables were found inside five shipping containers that arrived in the country on board a Chinese vessel last month.

“These smuggled goods rob our government of revenues, pose a risk to public health and undermine the livelihood of our farmers,” Tiu Laurel said after inspecting the containers.

He was accompanied by Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) chief Glen Panganiban, Bureau of Customs Deputy Commissioner Juvymax Yu and BOC-Subic district collector Ricardo Morales.

The vegetables were reportedly imported from China by the Betron Consumer Goods Trading, which declared the shipment as frozen fish egg balls.

Shortly after the arrival of the vessel, the BPI requested the BOC and the DA to inspect the contents of the shipping containers.

Instead of frozen fish egg balls, authorities found assorted vegetables, including 58 and 86 tons of carrots and white onions, respectively.

Import regulations require importers of fresh vegetables and other farm products to secure sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances from the BPI.

For processed food items like frozen fish egg balls, importers are required to secure permits from the Food and Drug Administration.

Panganiban said the seized vegetables would be tested for pesticide residues, heavy metals and microbiological contaminants.

If the vegetables are found unfit for human consumption, these will be destroyed immediately, he said.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/09/12/2384569/p21-million-smuggled-carrots-onions-seized-subic>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

ASF plagues 19 towns in Bicol

By: [Michael B. Jaucian](#) - Correspondent / [@mbjaucianINQ](#)

[Inquirer Southern Luzon](#) / 07:24 PM September 11, 2024



INQUIRER FILES

LEGAZPI CITY — The number of African Swine Fever (ASF) cases continues to rise in the Bicol region, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Lovella Guarin, DA Bicol information officer, told the Inquirer in an interview on Wednesday, September 11, that the ASF cases in Bicol are now at an alarming status.

“Based on the latest monitoring from August to September, there are 19 towns in the Bicol region infected with ASF,” Guarin said.

This figure includes the town of Oas in the province of Albay; Baao, Bula, Pili, Nabua, Ocampo, Libmanan, Presentacion, Tigaon, Minalabac, Sagñay, and Iriga City in Camarines Sur; Pandan, Caramoran, and Virac in Catanduanes; Cavarera, Dimasalang, and San Pascual in Masbate; and Pilar in Sorsogon.

To prevent the further spread of ASF, local government units have tightened checkpoints at the borders to prevent shipments of hogs and meat from leaving the affected areas.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1982333/asf-plagues-19-towns-in-bicol>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Romualdez says rice market prices down to P42 per kilogram

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 06:08 PM September 11, 2024



Speaker Martin Romualdez | PHOTO: Official Facebook page of the House of Representatives of the Philippines

MANILA, Philippines — Rice prices have dropped to P42 per kilogram according to House of Representatives Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, as he visited local markets in Makati City and Quezon City on Wednesday.

In a statement, Romualdez attributed this decrease in prices to the interventions made by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and his administration, like the reduction in imported rice tariffs to 15 percent.

“Nakita natin may 45 pesos kada kilo, meron ding 42 pesos for broken rice, yung well-milled P45. At yun talaga ang gusto nating makita, na pababa ng pababa (ang presyo ng bigas),” Romualdez said.

(We saw that there is really rice sold at P45 per kilogram, there is also P42 per kilogram for broken rice, P45 per kilogram for well-milled. That is what we want, lower prices of rice.)

“On behalf of the House of Representatives, we welcome this positive development. This is truly in line with the Marcos administration’s commitment to ensuring that food, particularly rice, remains affordable and accessible for all Filipinos,” he added.

According to Romualdez’ office, he visited the Guadalupe Market in Makati and the Farmers’ Market and Nepa Q-Mart in Quezon City upon the invitation of the Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders’ Movement (PRISM), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Romualdez said he hopes the trend will continue up to the Christmas season.

“Together with PRISM and other stakeholders, we have been actively working to stop rice hoarding and price manipulation. I would like to commend the rice traders who have responded to our call to make rice affordable and available for everyone,” the Speaker said.

“The Marcos administration is committed to implementing long-term solutions, such as increasing domestic rice production, improving import regulations, and penalizing those involved in illegal trade practices,” he added. “President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has made it clear that food security is a top priority for his administration. This is not just about lowering prices temporarily, but about ensuring a sustainable supply chain that benefits both consumers and farmers.”

Last June 24, Romualdez said that rice industry stakeholders gave an assurance that market prices can go down to P45 to P46 per kilogram by July due to savings from lower tariff rates.

This promise from the stakeholders were higher than the previous commitment of bringing down rice prices by P10 to P15 per kilogram if Republic Act No. 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) is amended.

The House finalized the amendments, but the Senate failed to address the proposed bill.

Romualdez however said that the RTL amendments is not the end-all of efforts to bring down rice prices, highlighting the administration's Program 29, where rice is sold at P29 per kilogram in Kadiwa stores.

According to the Speaker, inflation figures for August 2024 slowed down because of this program.

Aside from Romualdez, several lawmakers like Deputy Majority Leader Erwin Tulfo, along with fellow ACT-CIS Partylist Rep. Edvic Yap, and agriculture panel chairperson and Quezon 1st District Rep. Mark Enverga were present during the visit.

“As we continue to work towards this goal, we ask for the cooperation of all stakeholders. This is a whole-of-nation approach, and together, we will make sure that no Filipino family goes hungry,” he said

“This price reduction is just the beginning. We will not stop until rice is affordable to every Filipino family. We remain committed to improving the livelihoods of our farmers while ensuring that consumers are not overburdened by high prices,” he added.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1982319/romualdez-says-rice-market-prices-down-to-p42-per-kilogram>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Gov't seizes P136M of smuggled carrots, onions, tobacco in Subic port

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 11:14 AM September 11, 2024



The Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Customs confiscated P136 million worth of fresh carrots, yellow onions and tobacco products that entered the country illegally. Local authorities on Wednesday confiscated P136 million worth of fresh carrots, yellow onions and tobacco products at the Port of Subic that entered the country illegally.

The Department of Agriculture (BOC) and the Bureau of Customs (BOC) seized five container vans of fresh carrots and yellow onions valued at P21 million and another two container vans of cigarettes estimated at P115 million. Five containers of fresh carrots and yellow onions were imported from China by Betron Consumer Goods Trading, which initially declared the cargo with frozen fish egg balls.

On the other hand, two containers of tobacco products from Taiwan, sourced by Subic All N1 Corp., had tissues on the front of the van but were found to contain cigarettes.

“Clearly, these are smuggled goods that rob our government of tariff revenue, pose a risk to public health, and undermine the livelihood of our vegetable farmers,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

“As directed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., we will be relentless in our effort to go after these smugglers,” he added.

Bureau of Plant Industry director Gerald Glenn Panganiban said confiscated vegetables would be tested to determine whether they are safe for human consumption.

These tests, he explained, would check if these perishable goods had pesticide residues, heavy metals and microbiological contaminants.

Any imported agricultural products that fail these tests would be condemned and destroyed as they are deemed unfit for human consumption or would pose health risks. Fresh vegetables and other agricultural products sourced from abroad require sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances to ensure that these goods follow existing standards to protect the health of humans, plants and animals, and prevent the spread of diseases or pests.

For processed food items, importers are required to secure permits from the Food and Drug Administration.

“Clearly, these are smuggled goods that rob our government of tariff revenue, pose a risk to public health, and undermine the livelihood of our vegetable farmers,” he added.

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For processed food items, importers are required to secure permits from the Food and Drug Administration.

<https://business.inquirer.net/479490/govt-seizes-p136m-of-smuggled-carrots-onions-tobacco-in-subic-port>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA backs projects to ensure stable egg supply in PH

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 01:47 PM September 11, 2024

A vendor mans his store which is selling eggs in Tondo, Manila. —GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is backing certain projects aimed at strengthening the egg value chain to ensure a stable egg supply and address challenges including high production costs.

The DA issued Memorandum Circular No. 36 outlining the guidelines for implementing egg industry development projects this year focusing on value-adding projects.

Such projects, involving storage, processing, marketing and waste management solutions, seek to address sustainability in the layer industry.

“The Philippines is self-sufficient in eggs but is vulnerable due to various factors such as high production costs, limited post-production capacity, high import dependency, and fluctuating prices,” the memo dated Sept. 6 read.

“To sustain the growth of the layer industry and ensure stable supply of eggs, it is important to provide proper support for modernization initiatives to enhance productivity, income generation, and biosecurity measures among layer farmers,” it added.

The project has four components: egg cold and dry warehouse, egg processing facility, market support to small-scale egg producers and manure composting.

According to the DA memo, an egg cold storage and dry warehouse would prolong eggs' shelf life and help stabilize supply and demand.

For the processing facility, a grant of P80 million will be given to large egg production areas in Batangas, Bulacan and key areas in Visayas and Mindanao.

Such facilities are designed to bolster egg production and supply nutritious food products to the government and Filipino consumers in general.

The DA will prioritize areas with significant local egg-producing industry in providing logistic support and market linkages to eliminate the disadvantages of the trader in the current system.

“This will ensure equitable price and income among the producers and affordable and safe eggs for the consumers,” it said.

The agency will also offer a grant of P30 million for projects that will convert animal manure and other farm/ crop wastes into natural or organic fertilizer, starting with peri-urban areas such as Rizal.

The grant “will help in a way minimize if not eradicate animal disease, control air, and water pollution, improve soil conditions, and increase farmers' income,” it added.

Interested entities may apply for the project and submit the requirements, including letter of intent, proof of land ownership, proof of existing egg enterprise/farm/business, project concept note or proposal, and program of works and design.

The country's chicken egg production totaled 731,361.8 metric tons in 2023, up by 3.2 percent from 708,499.6 metric tons (MT) a year ago, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed.

In the April to June period, chicken egg output rose by 9 percent to 198,044.8 MT from 181,740.2 MT.

In Metro Manila, a medium-sized chicken egg retailed from P7.75 to P8.50 each as of Monday, higher than last year's price of P6.20 to P8.50 apiece, according to the DA's price monitoring.

<https://business.inquirer.net/479499/da-backs-projects-to-ensure-stable-egg-supply-in-ph>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Six months seen as ‘best case’ for rapid approval of new ASF vaccines

September 11, 2024 | 8:17 pm



FREEPIK

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is working to expedite the approval of candidate vaccines for African Swine Fever (ASF), with the process expected to take six months in the best-case scenario.

“Due to the urgency of the situation, we are consulting with vets and other experts in this field on how to shorten the process of approval and trials. So, my best case is six months from now,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. told reporters on Wednesday.

Only the AVAC ASF Live vaccine from Vietnam has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for a limited government-controlled rollout. It has issued a Certificate of Product Registration for AVAC, valid for two years and subject to monitoring and annual evaluation.

On Monday, the FDA said that there were four ASF vaccine manufacturers undergoing clinical trials. The suppliers are from Thailand, the US, and Vietnam.

“I hope one or two more (vaccine manufacturers) get approval,” he added.

Earlier, the FDA and the Bureau of Animal Industry signed a memorandum of agreement to fast-track the approval of animal vaccines.

In the initial wave of inoculations, the DA said it expects to deploy 10,000 doses by the end of September to address the outbreak in Batangas province.

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

Mr. Laurel said that 150,000 doses from the second batch of vaccines should be awarded by October.

The DA said the vaccination rollout will be expanded to La Union, Quezon, Mindoro, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, and Cebu.

“By Oct. 10, the (vaccine) will be available for the DA to roll out,” he added.

There were 109 municipalities in 31 provinces that had active cases of ASF, according to the Bureau of Animal Industry as of Sept. 6.

ASF was first detected in the Philippines in 2019. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/11/620931/six-months-seen-as-best-case-for-rapid-approval-of-new-asf-vaccines/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Domestic sugar allocation seen improving prices for producers

September 11, 2024 | 8:16 pm



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

SUGAR FARMERS said the designation of the entire sugar harvest for the domestic market will fetch better prices for producers.

“(This) traditionally brings a more favorable price for producers, compared to other classifications of sugar,” National Federation of Sugarcane Planters President Enrique D. Rojas said in a statement on Wednesday.

The Sugar Regulatory Administration had earlier approved the classification of all sugar production for the 2024-2025 crop year as “B” sugar or for domestic use, according to Sugar Order No.1.

The regulator typically classifies domestic sugar production during the start of every crop year, based on the expected volume.

Sugar is classified as “A” for export to the United States, “B” for the domestic market, “C” for reserve sugar to be converted later into other classes, and “D” for export to the world market.

The SRA estimated a 7% drop in sugar production to 1.78 million metric tons (MMT) due to crop damage sustained during El Niño.

The government weather service, known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), declared the onset of El Niño in June last year, bringing below-normal rainfall conditions, dry spells and droughts. It ended in June 2024.

“With the expected shortfall of domestic sugar production versus the estimated domestic demand, it is a good move on the part of the (SRA) to designate sugar production as ‘B’ sugar for the domestic market,” Mr. Rojas added.

Sugarcane production dropped 42.3% year on year to 1.63 MMT during the second quarter, the Philippine Statistics Authority said.

“We are hoping that the weather for the rest of the crop year is favorable to give us an opportunity to recover the projected production shortfall,” he said.

PAGASA forecasts a 55% probability of La Niña occurring between October and December. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/11/620942/domestic-sugar-allocation-seen-improving-prices-for-producers/>

REMATE:

P136M ismagel na gulay, tobacco sa Subic port nasamsam

September 11, 2024 14:05



MANILA, Philippines – Kinumpiska ng mga awtoridad nitong Miyerkules, Setyembre 11 ang nasa P136 milyong halaga ng carrots, yellow onions at tobacco products sa Port of Subic na illegal na ipinuslit sa bansa.

Nasamsam ng Department of Agriculture (BOC) at Bureau of Customs (BOC) ang limang container van na naglalaman ng mga sariwang carrots at yellow onions na nagkakahalaga ng P21 milyon, at dalawa pang container van na naglalaman naman ng mga sigarilyo. Nagkakahalaga naman ito ng P115 milyon.

Ang limang container ng sariwang carrots at yellow onions ay inimport galing China ng Betron Consumer Goods Trading, na orihinal na idineklara bilang frozen fish egg balls.

Sa kabilang banda, ang dalawang container ng tobacco products naman ay nagmula sa Taiwan na inangat ng Subic All N1 Corp., na may mga tisyu sa harap ng van ngunit napag-alaman na may mga laman din palang sigarilyo.

“Clearly, these are smuggled goods that rob our government of tariff revenue, pose a risk to public health, and undermine the livelihood of our vegetable farmers,” sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

“As directed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., we will be relentless in our effort to go after these smugglers,” dagdag pa niya.

Ayon kay Bureau of Plant Industry director Gerald Glenn Panganiban, ang mga nakumpiskang gulay ay susuriin muna at aalamin kung ligtas kainin ng tao.

Ang mga imported agricultural product na babagsak sa mga pagsusuri ay sisirain at hindi ipakakain sa mga tao.

Obligadong makakuha ng sanitary at phytosanitary import clearances ang mga ipinapasok na sariwang gulay at iba pang agricultural products sa bansa upang maprotektahan ang kalusugan ng mga tao, halaman, at maging ang mga hayop.

Iniiwasan din nito na makapasok ang mga sakit na posibleng dala nito. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/p136m-ismagel-na-gulay-tobacco-sa-subic-port-nasamsam/>

REMATE:

P85-M meat products nasamsam ng BOC sa P'que

September 11, 2024 12:25



MANILA, Philippines – Nasamsam ng Bureau of Custom (BOC) ang P85 milyong halaga ng meat products sa anti-smuggling operation sa isang warehouse sa Parañaque City. Sa isang pahayag nitong Miyerkules, sinabi ng BOC na ininspeksyon ng mga awtoridad ang bodega at natuklasan ang malaking dami ng frozen food products kabilang ang duck, chicken, at pork mea

Ang mga bagay na ito ay minarkahan ng Chinese at iba pang wikang banyaga, ayon sa BOC.

Magsasagawa ang customs examiners ng imbentaryo ng mga kalakal sa presensya ng mga ahente at kinatawan ng Manila International Container Port (MICP), ayon sa BOC.

Sinabi ni BOC chief Bienvenido Rubio na “mahigpit nilang sinusubaybayan at kinokontrol ang mga agricultural imports para maiwasan ang pagpasok ng mga ipinagbabawal na produkto na maaaring makasira sa integridad ng ating industriya ng agrikultura.” *RNT*

<https://remate.ph/p85-m-meat-products-nasamsam-ng-boc-sa-pque/>

ABANTE:

P42-45 per kilong bigas nagkalat na sa mga palengke sa Metro Manila

Abante News

• **September 11, 2024**



Kinumpirma ng m grupo ng mga rice retailers na halos lahat ng palengke sa Metro Manila ay naglalako na ng P42 hanggang P45 kada kilo ng regular at well-milled rice dahil sa inisyatiba ng administrasyon ni Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr., na babaan ang taripa ng bigas sa bansa sa 15 porsyento.

Bilang patunay, inanyayahan nitong Martes ng umaga ng Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders’ Movement (PRISM), isang malaking organisasyon ng mga rice traders, si Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez at iba pang mambabatas para mag-inspeksyon ng presyo ng bigas sa Guadalupe Market sa Makati, Farmers’ Market at Nepa QMart sa Quezon City.

Kasama ni Speaker sa pagiikot sa palengke sina ACT-CIS partylist Reps. Erwin Tulfo at Edvic Yap at Quezon province Rep. Mark Emverga.

“Inimbitahan po namin si Speaker (Romualdez) para sa market visit para ipakita sa kanya na lahat ay nagbebenta na ng P42-P45 kada kilo ng bigas. Ang nakita po namin dito na factor yung pagbaba po ng taripa from 35% to 15%,” ani Orly Panuntag, pangulo ng PRISM.

“So natutuwa po yung mga retailers natin tsaka yung mga consumers po natin meron silang aasahan ngayon na P42 hanggang P45, ibababa pa po namin,” dagdag pa niya.

Ikinalugod naman ni Speaker and kapansin-pansin na agarang pagbaba ng presyo ng mga bigas dahil sa pagbaba ng taripa.

“Nag-iinspect lang tayo minomonitor natin yung presyo ng mga bigas dito talagang makikita natin ang pagbaba ng presyo ng mga bigas sa abot kayang presyo sa masa. Ito yunng programa ng ating President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., na abot kaya lahat ng presyo,” sinabi ni Speaker Romualdez.

Karamihan naman sa mga tindero at may-ari ng bigasan sa mga naturang palengke ay nagpapasalamat sa pamahalaan dahil sa patuloy na pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas sa mga pamilihan.

“Nagpapasalamat po kami at lalo na higit po sa inyong lahat at may dumating na po na mababa,” ayon kay Rey Panganiban, rice trader

Sinabi naman ni Arnel Figuro, negosyante ng bigas sa Farmers’ Market na maayos daw ang bentahan ngayon simula ng ibaba ang taripa sa bigas.

“Sabi ko nga kay Speaker kanina salamat po sa kanila tsaka kay Pangulo natin kay BBM dahil sa tariff na bagong pinalabas nila na 15% na tariff atleast may nakakabangga ang mga importanted yung local natin so nababa.... bumaba yung presyo ng bigas kaya may nakukuha tayo na mura mura sana magtuloy tuloy,” ani Figuro.

Ayon naman kay Elaine Cabildo, “Dahil bumaba nga yung bigas marami kaming pwedeng maioffer na mas mababang bigas kasi nga syempre hirap din sila sa budget kasi nga hindi lang naman bigas ang mahal ngayon.

“On behalf of the House of Representatives, we welcome this positive development. This is truly in line with the Marcos administration’s commitment to ensuring that food, particularly rice, remains affordable and accessible for all Filipinos,” anang Speaker.

“The reduction in rice prices that we are seeing in these markets is a reflection of our administration’s efforts to stabilize the food supply and protect consumers from price surges. We are hoping that this trend will continue across the country, bringing much-needed relief to Filipino families,” dagdag ng lider ng Kongreso.

Kasama ring nag-ikot sa palengke sina DTI Price Control ASec Agaton Uvero, DA Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Services Asec Bebang Guevarra, at DTI representatives Dir. Phillip Sawali, Div. Chief Rosita Jaleco at Asst. Div. Chief Joel Buag.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/09/11/p42-45-per-kilong-bigas-nagkalat-na-sa-mga-palengke-sa-metro-manila/>

MANILA STANDARD

Gov't gives additional aid to farmers, fisherfolks



AKAP FOR FISHERS AND FARMERS. President Ferdinand Marcos joins groupie after the distribution on Wednesday of P157.9 million in agricultural support to farmers and fishermen to boost farm productivity and fight hunger in Ilocos Norte.

By Charles Dantes

September 11, 2024, 11:40 pm

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. announced additional aid for farmers and fishermen, following six months of drought that devastated agriculture and fisheries across the country.

“We’ve just gone through a very difficult time with six months of no rain,” Mr. Marcos said.

“Many have struggled, and much has been damaged, leaving our farmers and fishermen in need of support,” he added.

The government led the distribution on Wednesday of P157.9 million in agricultural support to farmers and fisherfolk to boost farm productivity and fight hunger in Ilocos Norte.

President Marcos emphasized the importance of new technologies like solar-powered irrigation, which reduces dependence on fuel and is easier to maintain.

“These initiatives are part of our larger goal to support farmers and recognize their hard work for the country,” the President said.

He added that various government agencies, including the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), are working together to provide comprehensive aid to affected sectors.

He also encouraged farmers to explore value-added processing to increase profits and enhance livelihoods.

“Despite the challenges of El Niño, we can recover and improve our production,” he said.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314496293/govt-gives-additional-aid-to-farmers-fisherfoks.html>

DA, BOC intercept smuggled vegetables



SMUGGLED VEGGIES. Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. lead Department of Agriculture and Bureau of Customs officials in inspecting seized smuggled carrots and yellow onions from China at the Port of Subic. With Laurel are (from left) Bureau of Plant Industry director Glen Panganiban, Customs deputy chief Juvymax Uy and Subic Customs collector Ricardo Morales. Jay Morales

By Othel V. Campos

September 11, 2024, 11:20 pm

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Bureau of Customs (BOC) successfully intercepted a shipment of smuggled fresh carrots yellow onions, and cigarettes worth an estimated P136 million, at the Port of Subic on Wednesday.

The illegal cargo, consisting of 58 metric tons of carrots and 86 metric tons of yellow onions, amounting to P21 million, was discovered in five containers aboard the vessel SITC Licheng, which had arrived from China on August 15.

The importer, Betron Consumer Goods Trading, had falsely declared the shipment as frozen fish egg balls.

The inspection, triggered by a request from the Bureau of Plant Industry-Plant Quarantine Service (BPI-PQS), revealed the discrepancy between the declared goods and the actual contents of the containers.

Fresh vegetables require a sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC) from the BPI, whereas processed food items need permits from the Food and Drug Administration.

DA Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. vowed to intensify efforts to combat smuggling as an economic sabotage that deprives the government of tariff revenue, jeopardizes public health, and harms local farmers.

BPI director Gerald Glenn Panganiban announced that the seized vegetables will undergo testing to ensure their safety for consumption.

Accidentally discovered during the inspection was a separate shipment of illegal tobacco worth P115 million, found hidden in boxes behind imported tissue paper.

“As directed by President Ferdinand Marcos,7 Jr., we will be relentless in our effort to go after these smugglers,” the DA chief said.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314496283/da-boc-intercept-smuggled-vegetables.html>

MANILA STANDARD

Speaker welcomes drop in rice prices in Metro markets



MARKET CHECK. Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez shakes the hand of a rice stall owner when he did the rounds of three Metro Manila public markets on Wednesday upon the invitation of Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders' Movement (PRISM). Norman Cruz

By Maricel Cruz

September 12, 2024, 12:35 am

Speaker Martin G. Romualdez on Wednesday welcomed the decline in the prices of rice after confirming the availability of rice selling by as low as P42 per kilo during a visit to three key markets in Metro Manila Wednesday morning.

Romualdez visited Guadalupe Market in Makati, as well as the Farmers' Market and Nepa Q-Mart in Quezon City upon the invitation of the Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders' Movement (PRISM), a large organization of rice traders, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Agriculture.

He attributed the drop in rice prices to the effective interventions made by the administration of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. to reduce the costs of the Filipino staple, stabilize the food supply, and protect consumers from price surges.

“We saw that there is P45 per kilo, there is also P42 for broken rice, the well-milled P45. And that’s really what we want to see, which is the price of rice going down,” he said.

“On behalf of the House of Representatives, we welcome this positive development. This is truly in line with the Marcos administration’s commitment to ensuring that food, particularly rice, remains affordable and accessible for all Filipinos,” the leader of the 307-strong House of Representatives added.

He expressed hopes the trend will continue to bring much-needed relief to Filipino families, particularly in the coming Christmas season.

“The factor we saw here is the drop in the tariff from 35 percent to 15 percent. So our retailers are happy as well as our consumers,” he added.

Accompanying the Speaker during the market visit were Deputy Majority Leader Erwin Tulfo, along with fellow ACT-CIS Partylist Rep. Edvic Yap, and Agriculture Committee Chair and Quezon Rep. Mark Enverga.

DTI Price Control Asec. Agaton Uvero, DA Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Services Asec. Bebang Guevarra, and DTI representatives Dir. Phillip Sawali, Div. Chief Rosita Jaleco and Asst. Div. Chief Joel Buag also joined the party of Romualdez during the market visit.

In addition to the decisive action of President Marcos on rice tariff, Romualdez also cited the initiatives of the House leadership, including collaboration with rice traders, as a factor in the drop in the price of the staple food.

“Together with PRISM and other stakeholders, we have been actively working to stop rice hoarding and price manipulation. I would like to commend the rice traders who have responded to our call to make rice affordable and available for everyone,” the Speaker said.

It could be recalled that Romualdez led fact-finding missions to inspect rice warehouses in Bulacan, where instances of hoarding were discovered. These investigations, the House chief noted, have been crucial in bringing unscrupulous traders to light and ensuring that rice stocks are released to the market.

“The Marcos administration is committed to implementing long-term solutions, such as increasing domestic rice production, improving import regulations, and penalizing those involved in illegal trade practices,” Romualdez said.

“President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has made it clear that food security is a top priority for his administration. This is not just about lowering prices temporarily, but about ensuring a sustainable supply chain that benefits both consumers and farmers,” he added.

DA Asec. Guevarra said that additional farm input programs being implemented by the department are expected to boost rice productivity by next year, which could further bring down prices of the staple food.

Meanwhile, Romualdez also called on local government units and private stakeholders to support ongoing initiatives aimed at bringing down the cost of essential goods, emphasizing that everyone has a role to play in stabilizing the market.

“As we continue to work towards this goal, we ask for the cooperation of all stakeholders. This is a whole-of-nation approach, and together, we will make sure that no Filipino family goes hungry,” he continued.

“This price reduction is just the beginning. We will not stop until rice is affordable to every Filipino family. We remain committed to improving the livelihoods of our farmers while ensuring that consumers are not overburdened by high prices.”

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314496318/speaker-welcomes-drop-in-rice-prices-in-metro-markets.html>

Marcos distributes aid to Ilocos farmers

By Kristina Maralit
September 12, 2024

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday led the distribution of P157.9 million worth of agricultural support to farmers and fisherfolk in Ilocos Norte to help them achieve food security in the province.

The event coincided with the celebration of Marcos Day in Batac City to mark the 107th birth anniversary of his father, Ferdinand Sr.

"All this assistance is only part of our bigger goal for everyone for all the hard work you've been putting in for Ilocos and the whole country," the chief executive said in Filipino. "Every step that we take comes under the unity that we have forged between the different agencies of our government. We are all in this together."



President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. chats with farmers who were among the beneficiaries of equipment distributed at the Mariano Marcos State University in the City of Batac in Ilocos Norte, on Sept. 11, 2024. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Around 1,000 farmers, fishermen and livestock raisers from different associations in the province received other support like seeds, tractors, fertilizers, fishery paraphernalia, fuel subsidies, and solar-powered

irrigation systems — a collective effort from the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Labor and Employment, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, and the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

Marcos vowed to continue providing assistance to the sector that has been badly affected by climate anomalies.

The provision for different kinds of aid will be done through the "Ayuda sa Kapos ang Kita Program (AKAP)" initiative.



"Your government recognizes the need to really help all those needing assistance because there were no harvests the past six months because of El Niño. That is why we are here to give you assistance from different agencies," he said.

"And hopefully, by Christmas, all of us will have better conditions. We will be assisting you for as long as we can," he added.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/12/news/national/marcos-distributes-aid-to-ilocos-farmers/1970786>

Smuggled veggies seized at Subic

By Janine Alexis Miguel
September 12, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has seized five containers of undocumented yellow onions and other vegetables in Subic Port valued at P21 million.

In coordination with the Bureau of Customs, the government confiscated yellow onions and carrots from the vessel SITC Licheng, which was imported from China by Betron Consumer Goods Trading.

The vessel, which arrived on August 15, declared its cargo as frozen fish egg balls, but the inspection revealed that it contained 58 metric tons (MT) of carrots and 86 MT of yellow onions, according to the DA.

"Clearly, these are smuggled goods that rob our government of tariff revenue, pose a risk to public health and undermine the livelihood of our vegetable farmers," said Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Last month, the department allowed the importation of 16,000 MT of yellow onions to address supply shortage anticipated for the rest of the year.

As mandated by the department's import regulations, fresh vegetables and other agricultural food products require Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearances issued by the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

For processed food items like the declared commodity, frozen fish egg balls importers are required to secure permits from the Food and Drug Administration.

"As directed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., we will be relentless in our effort to go after these smugglers," Tiu Laurel said.

In addition, two more container vans were opened in Subic containing smuggled cigarettes from Taiwan worth P115 million. The DA said that the front of the container was full of tissues as a disguise.

The agriculture chief led the inspection at the Port of Subic with BPI Director Glen Panganiban, Customs Deputy Commissioner Juvymax Yu and Subic Customs collector Ricardo Morales.

The seized vegetables will be tested to assess if it's safe for human consumption. These tests will examine pesticide residues, heavy metals and microbiological contaminants.

If found unfit for human consumption, the smuggled agricultural products will be condemned and destroyed, and will not be sold or donated, in accordance with DA and Department of Health regulations.

In a related development, the test recently conducted by the BPI on smuggled oranges from Thailand seized last month at the Manila International Container Port showed significant pesticide residues and microbiological contaminants, exceeding the country's safety standards and regulations.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/12/regions/smuggled-veggies-seized-at-subic/1970887>

Searca taps RAIN for youth farming

By Leander C. Domingo
September 12, 2024

THE Laguna-based Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) has enlisted Thai expertise to get more young Filipinos into farming.

An expert from the Thailand Regional Agriculture Innovation Network (RAIN) was tapped for Searca's career orientation program for youth called "Sowing Seeds: Cultivating Youth's Future in Agriculture."

Searca Center Director Glenn Gregorio said this initiative aims to "inspire Southeast Asia's next generation of agricultural leaders by introducing them to cutting-edge agricultural technologies and agri-entrepreneurship."



Phonlapat Amornrattanaket of the Thailand RAIN project explains their drone program to a team from the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO Led by Sharon Malaiba, Partnerships Unite head and Young Forces for Agricultural Innovation or #Y4AGRI lead, the Searca team met on September 2 with Phonlapat Amornrattanaket, business development specialist, Thailand RAIN project, regarding the next holding of Sowing Seeds.

Gregorio said the program targets senior high school and pre-university students across Southeast Asia to "introduce them to the latest

advancements in agricultural technology and how these present opportunities to those who pursue a degree and career in agriculture."

On September 6, the first Sowing Seeds session at Patumwan Demonstration School in Bangkok, Thailand, Phonlapat shared insights on the use of drone technology to boost agricultural productivity.

As a partner of Winrock in the Thailand RAIN project, Gregorio said Winrock and Searca will "conduct coordinated scanning for innovations, provide guidance to other universities and actors on scanning, and co-host learning sessions."

"Both will also define best practices for bundling finance, extension, equality and data into innovations. The collaboration for the Sowing Seeds activity is a step in co-hosting learning sessions," he added.

Gregorio said that Searca and Winrock agreed to develop youth outreach programs to "excite them about agri-innovations and link them to specific entrepreneurial opportunities."

The Searca team and Phonpalat also discussed the possibility of leveraging Thailand RAIN project's innovations.

"This will engage more Thai youth in innovation and agri-entrepreneurship by jointly organizing a series of learning sessions in the eight provinces covered by the Rain project," the team said.

Joining Malaiba at the meeting were Leah Lyn Domingo, Searca public relations specialist, and Loise Ann Carandang, Searca senior associate for communications and #Y4AGRI co-lead.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/12/business/agribusiness/searca-taps-rain-for-youth-farming/1970836>

THE MANILA TIMES

WEMNS to empower women in agriculture

By The Manila Times
September 12, 2024

THE introduction of the Women's Empowerment Metric for National Statistical Systems (WEMNS) marks a significant advancement in addressing the data gap in assessing women's empowerment in the country, especially in agriculture.

At a recent seminar hosted by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), in collaboration with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), there were discussions on how WEMNS offers a streamlined and efficient approach to measuring women's empowerment across various dimensions. The seminar also highlighted the tool's critical role in enhancing the evaluation and promotion of women's empowerment, aligning with national development goals.

WEMNS builds upon and refines the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), which was developed in 2012. It measured women's inclusion in agriculture through household surveys, but it faced limitations in capturing the full complexity of women's empowerment.

"Empowerment is not just about decision-making within the household," explained IFPRI senior research fellow Agnes Quisumbing, who presented the WEAI at the seminar. "It also includes dimensions like time allocation, access to financial services, property rights and freedom from violence," she added.

Quisumbing emphasized the importance of incorporating new indicators that assess both intrinsic and instrumental agency — such as women's ability to make important life choices and their participation in community organizations. "By focusing on these broader indicators, we can better understand the constraints women face and how these affect their overall empowerment," she noted.

To address these limitations, the pro-WEAI was developed under the Gender Agriculture and Assets Project Phase 2. This version aimed to evaluate the impact of agricultural projects on women, from direct benefits to broader societal transformation.

Effective in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa

However, while pro-WEAI has proven effective in assessing agricultural projects in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, WEMNS is designed to offer a more comprehensive and adaptable tool for wider applications.

"The pro-WEAI has served us well, but its specificity to agriculture means we need a more versatile tool for national-level implementation," said Hazel Malapit, IFPRI senior research coordinator, during her discussion on WEMNS.

WEMNS was developed to evaluate empowerment across four key areas: inner strength, practical capabilities, collective influence and access to resources. By simplifying data collection processes while still capturing the essential dimensions of empowerment, WEMNS offers a pragmatic solution for policymakers.

"This leaner tool is suitable for national statistical systems and can be implemented at scale," Malapit explained, citing successful pilot projects in countries like Bangladesh, Malawi, Nepal and Guatemala. These pilots demonstrated that WEMNS could provide actionable

insights into women's empowerment while being less resource-intensive than its predecessor.

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"This leaner tool is suitable for national statistical systems and can be implemented at scale," Malapit explained, citing successful pilot projects in countries like Bangladesh, Malawi, Nepal and Guatemala. These pilots demonstrated that WEMNS could provide actionable insights into women's empowerment while being less resource-intensive than its predecessor.

However, Malapit brought up the broader implications of these tools, warning that without consistent and reliable indicators, efforts to track and promote gender equality risk becoming ineffective.

"Metrics matter if they motivate, monitor and shape policy," she asserted, emphasizing that measurable progress toward gender equality is essential for making a real impact on the ground.

Transitioning from theoretical frameworks to practical applications, former PIDS president Celia Reyes addressed the challenges of integrating gender-sensitive indicators into national development programs and surveys.

"Incorporating these indicators into national surveys will allow us to monitor progress at a larger scale and make informed decisions that truly benefit women, especially in rural areas," she asserted during her comments on the two IFPRI presentations. She underscored the need for robust, context-specific data to drive effective interventions and address regional challenges.

PIDS senior research fellow Jose Ramon Albert, also providing comments to the presentations, stressed the importance of data disaggregation to fully capture the essence of women's empowerment.

"Data disaggregation is essential for understanding the different dimensions of empowerment," Albert explained. "It allows us to see not just where women stand but also how various factors such as age, education and geographic location affect their empowerment," he continued. This level of detail, he argued, is crucial for designing interventions that are tailored to the specific needs of different groups of women.

Albert cautioned that treating women as a homogenous group is ineffective for policy development. "By looking at the data more closely, we can develop policies that are more targeted and effective in addressing the unique challenges faced by women in different contexts," he stressed.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/12/business/agribusiness/wemns-to-empower-women-in-agriculture/1970834>

Latest rice tech pushed in Isabela

By The Manila Times
September 12, 2024

THE Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) station in Isabela recently showcased advancements in rice production technology during the 2024 Lakbay Palay Wet Season event for agriculture students and rice farmers at Malasin, San Mateo, in the province.

Joy Bartolome Duldulao, PhilRice-Isabela officer in charge branch director, said the Lakbay Palay event aims to introduce and demonstrate various modern rice production technologies available at the station.

Approximately 450 rice farmers and agriculture students from the Cagayan Valley and Cordillera Administrative Regions attended the event, involving partner agencies, private companies, farm schools, state universities and colleges, and local government units.



The Philippine Rice Research Institute station in Isabela recently showcased advancements in rice production technology. PIA PHOTO

Activities included a field tour of rice demonstration farms, and Tekno Tiangge and Tekno Talakayan sessions.

Department of Agriculture-Cordillera Administrative Region Technical Director for Research and Regulations Arlene Sagayo emphasized that the Lakbay Palay event highlights the development of rice technology.

"If everyone unites and collaborates to overcome challenges, we can achieve our goals and build a stronger agricultural community," she said.

During the field visit, participants had the opportunity to explore 15 field demonstration stations.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/12/business/agribusiness/latest-rice-tech-pushed-in-isabela/1970833>

PBBM sees agriculture production rebounding from El Niño

Samuel P. Medenilla
September 12, 2024

WITH support from the government, including fuel subsidies, agriculture production can rebound in the aftermath of the El Niño, a confident President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said on Wednesday.

“Our farmers were doing quite well leading to high [crop] production until we were hit [by the effects] of El Niño. But we will be able to recover so that their products will be better and all be processed,” the chief executive said in Filipino during the distribution of aid under various government interventions to farmers and fisherfolks in Ilocos Norte last Wednesday.

The P157.9 million worth of aid was given to 1,000 farmers and fisherfolk in the province to help boost their productivity.

The beneficiaries received seeds, tractors, fertilizers, fishery paraphernalia, fuel subsidies, and solar-powered irrigation systems worth more than P156 million.

Aside from support to agriculture workers, Marcos also led in the distribution of 69 ambulances in Paoay City and emergency employment benefits for Batac City and Laoag as part of the 107th commemoration of the birthday of his father, former President Ferdinand Marcos Sr.

From May to June, Marcos has also led in the distribution of P906 million worth of financial aid to 90,000 beneficiaries.

He said he also wants to assist agricultural workers in processing their products to raise their profits.

“The higher the value-added [in their products], the bigger will be their income, which will improve their livelihood,” he said.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said the dry spell and droughts caused by El Niño, which left an estimated P9.8 billion worth of damage to agriculture, ended in June.

The effects of El Niño as well other weather disturbances have prompted the Department of Agriculture to lower its projected palay or unmilled rice production this year from 20.44 million metric tons (MMT) to just 20.1 MMT.

The expected palay production this year, however, is still higher compared to the 20.06 MMT in 2023.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/12/pbbm-sees-agriculture-production-rebounding-from-el-nino/>

DA, BOC seize P136M in smuggled veggies, tobacco

Ada Pelonia
September 12, 2024



DA Sec. Francisco Tiu Laurel: “Clearly, these are smuggled goods that rob our government of tariff revenue, pose a risk to public health, and undermine the livelihood of our vegetable farmers.”

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) and Bureau of Customs (BOC) seized P136 million worth of smuggled carrots, yellow onions, and cigarettes in Subic on Wednesday.

The five containers carrying undocumented shipment of fresh carrots and yellow onions from China were valued at P21 million, while two additional containers inspected held smuggled cigarettes from Taiwan worth P115 million, according to DA.

“Clearly, these are smuggled goods that rob our government of tariff revenue, pose a risk to public health, and undermine the livelihood of our vegetable farmers,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. was quoted in the statement as saying.

“As directed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., we will be relentless in our effort to go after these smugglers,” he added.

The DA said the containers of the vegetables were aboard the vessel SITC Licheng, which docked at the Port of Subic on August 15. It added that the agricultural commodities were imported by Betron Consumer Goods Trading.

Following the vessel’s arrival, the Bureau of Plant Industry-Plant Quarantine Service at the Port of Subic requested BOC to inspect the contents of the five containers.

Despite Betron's declaration of the cargo as frozen fish egg balls, the government's inspection revealed a "substantial quantity" of fresh vegetables: 58 metric tons (MT) of carrots and 86 MT of yellow onions.

Laurel earlier said the Philippines will import 16,000 MT of yellow onions as domestic supply is depleted. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/29/phl-to-import-limited-quantity-of-yellow-onions/>)

The DA said import regulations mandate that fresh vegetables and other agricultural food products require Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearances (SPSIC) issued by the BPI.

For processed food items, like the declared commodity, frozen fish egg balls importers are required to secure permits from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

BPI Director Gerald Glenn Panganiban said that samples from the seized vegetables would be tested to determine their suitability for human consumption. The tests will check for pesticide residues, heavy metals, and microbiological contaminants.

"Any imported agricultural products that fail these tests will be condemned and destroyed," the DA said.

The agency recently reported that smuggled oranges seized last month showed significant pesticide residues and microbiological contaminants, exceeding the country's safety standards and regulations.

According to BPI, perishable goods deemed unfit for human consumption or posing health risks will not be sold or donated, in accordance with DA and Department of Health (DOH) regulations.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/12/da-boc-seize-p136m-in-smuggled-veggies-tobacco/>

House leaders elated by drop in rice prices

Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz
September 11, 2024

THE leadership of the House of Representatives on Wednesday welcomed the significant decrease in rice prices, which now sell at as low as P42 per kilo, and expressed hopes that this trend continues until the Christmas season.

Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez visited the Guadalupe Market in Makati, as well as the Farmers Market and Nepa Q-Mart in Quezon City, together with representatives of the Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders' Movement (PRISM), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and the Department of Agriculture (DA) to see for himself if rice prices have really gone down.

Romualdez attributed the price decrease to the efforts of the administration to stabilize the food supply, lower the cost of the staple, and protect consumers from price increases.

“We’ve seen rice being sold at P45 per kilo, with broken rice at P42, and well-milled rice at P45. What we really want to see is the continued decrease in rice prices,” Romualdez said.

“On behalf of the House of Representatives, we welcome this positive development. This is truly in line with the Marcos administration’s commitment to ensure that food, particularly rice, remains affordable and accessible for all Filipinos,” he added.

Orly Manuntag of PRISM on the other hand noted that the reduction of tariff on imported rice from 35 percent to 15 percent, as outlined in Executive Order 62 signed by President Marcos on June 20, had positively affected retailers and consumers, who are pleased with this development.

“The factor we observed here is the reduction of tariffs from 35 percent to 15 percent. Retailers as well as consumers are very pleased with this development,” he said.

Hope

ROMUALDEZ expressed hopes that the trend will continue to bring much-needed relief to Filipino families, particularly in the coming Christmas season.

He is optimistic that this trend will continue, especially with the Christmas season approaching, to ease the burden on Filipino families.

Accompanying the Speaker during the market visit were Deputy Majority Leader Erwin Tulfo, along with fellow ACT-CIS Rep. Edvic Yap, and the chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, Quezon Rep. Mark Enverga.

DTI Price Control Assistant Secretary Agaton Uvero, DA Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Services Assistant Secretary Bebang Guevarra, and DTI representatives Director Phillip Sawali, Division Chief Rosita Jaleco, and Assistant Division Chief Joel Buag also joined Romualdez during the market visit.

Romualdez credited the collaborative efforts of Congress, rice traders, and other stakeholders in combating hoarding and price manipulation, further noting that investigations into rice hoarding in Bulacan had been instrumental in releasing stocks into the market.

“Together with PRISM and other stakeholders, we have been actively working to stop rice hoarding and price manipulation. I would like to commend the rice traders who have responded to our call to make rice affordable and available for everyone,” the Speaker said.

“The Marcos administration is committed to implementing long-term solutions, such as increasing domestic rice production, improving import regulations, and penalizing those involved in illegal trade practices,” Romualdez said.

For her part, Guevarra said that additional farm input programs being implemented by the department are expected to boost rice productivity by next year, which could further bring down prices of the staple food.

Support

ROMUALDEZ also urged local governments and private stakeholders to continue supporting efforts to reduce the cost of essential goods, emphasizing the importance of collective action.

“As we continue to work towards this goal, we ask for the cooperation of all stakeholders. This is a whole-of-nation approach, and together, we will make sure that no Filipino family goes hungry,” he said.

“This price reduction is just the beginning. We will not stop until rice is affordable to every Filipino family. We remain committed to **improving the livelihoods of our farmers while ensuring that consumers are not overburdened by high prices,**” he added.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/11/house-leaders-elated-by-drop-in-rice-prices/>

More ASF vaccine makers seek FDA nod–DA

Ada Pelonia and Butch Fernandez
September 11, 2024



Providers of vaccines against African swine fever (ASF) from four countries are seeking the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) approval, according to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Laurel said the makers of six vaccine brands filed their application with the FDA earlier this year.

“Due to the urgency of the situation, we are consulting [veterinarians] and other experts in this field to find out how we can shorten the trials and approval process,” he told reporters in an interview in Subic where he inspected agricultural products last Wednesday.

“I think the best case scenario is that one or two new vaccines will hurdle the regulatory process and trials six months from now.”

The FDA issued only a two-year Certificate of Product Registration (CPR) under monitored release to the AVAC ASF vaccine from Vietnam, which is subject to annual

evaluation. The said vaccine was recently rolled out through a government-controlled inoculation scheme.

The Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) initiated the first round of vaccinations on healthy pigs in Lobo, Batangas last August 30. The municipality has been identified as ground zero for the largest ASF outbreak since the monsoon season began.

‘Hasten approval’

To address the current ASF outbreak that has severely hit the local hog industry, Senator Cynthia Villar said the FDA should immediately approve vaccines against the fatal hog disease.

Villar, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, conducted last September 9 a public hearing on ASF based on Senate Resolution No. 565 filed by Senator Francis Tolentino.

Villar and Tolentino were dismayed over “the slow, weak and lack of scientific response” of the DA and the Bureau of Animal Industry to the outbreak.

“The public hearing brought together key stakeholders from the agriculture sector—government agencies, mayors of affected municipalities, private sector, and affected farmers—to discuss urgent measures aimed at halting the spread of the disease,” said Villar.

She said there is an “urgent need” for a vaccine as a long-term solution to ASF.

“The ASF, a highly contagious and fatal viral disease affecting domestic hogs, was first confirmed in the Philippines in 2019. Five years have passed and it continuously plagues the swine industry, causing severe losses in hog populations.”

‘Expand testing’

Laurel earlier instructed the BAI to expand its controlled testing of the ASF vaccine to additional areas in Luzon as well as 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 BAI’s controlled testing of the initial 150,000 doses of ASF vaccines we have imported from Vietnam,” Laurel said in a separate statement.

He said commercial pig farms located in areas with numerous infections would also receive ASF vaccines to safeguard their herd from the disease.

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

The DA recently increased indemnification for diseased pigs surrendered for culling, raising the compensation ceiling to P12,000 for breeders from the previous maximum of P5,000.

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

The agriculture chief earlier announced that a second batch of about 150,000 doses of ASF vaccines is set to arrive in the country. The department initially procured 10,000 doses.

According to the DA, since the first ASF outbreak in 2019 that led to the culling of over 300,000 pigs, the Philippine hog industry has struggled to recover from the disease’s severe impact.

It added that the high mortality rate of ASF has forced many small-scale pig farms to cease operations to avoid substantial losses.

Data from the BAI showed 472 barangays have active ASF cases as of September 6, thrice the number recorded on July 26 in 150 barangays.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/11/more-asf-vaccine-makers-seek-fda-nod-da/>

Ubra: PHL will have enough poultry this holiday season

Ada Pelonia
September 11, 2024

Poultry raisers belonging to the United Broiler Raisers Association (Ubra) said the Philippines would have enough supply of local chicken during the holidays.

“Based on projections and past experiences, (chicken) supply would be more than sufficient,” Ubra Chairman Elias Jose Inciong told the BusinessMirror via Viber.

However, Inciong said the expected spike in demand for poultry meat during the holidays will have an impact on prices.

“The holidays may exert upward pressure depending on the supply of pork and fish; imports may exert downward pressure.”

The price of chicken in Metro Manila markets ranged from P180 to P240 per kilo as of September 10, based on the price monitoring of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

According to Inciong, “the gap is too big” between the retail price of P240 per kg and the current farmgate price.

“Masyadong malayo na iyang P240 per kilo. The highest farmgate today is P132 (per kilo).”

Inciong said the country’s dressed chicken inventory declined in August as traders are preparing for shipments during the “ber” months.

Data from the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) showed that dressed chicken inventory in cold storage facilities nationwide stood at 31,917 metric tons (MT) as of August 26. This was lower than the 32,413 MT recorded in the previous week.

“Importers are maybe creating more space for their September to December arrivals.”

Figures from the NMIS, an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture, revealed that a chunk of the inventory during the period consisted of imports at 21,601 MT while the local inventory was at 10,315 MT.

The agency said its data excluded freshly chilled chicken and mechanically deboned meat (MDM), adding that the inventory for those already in distribution channels was not included.

Meanwhile, the country’s meat imports grew by nearly 10 percent in the first semester, driven by higher chicken and pork purchases abroad.

Data from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) showed that meat imports increased by 9.64 percent to 647,745 MT from January to June, compared to last year’s 590,766 MT.

Chicken imports rose 4.13 percent to 221,598 MT from 212,811 MT. Mechanically deboned meat (MDM) accounted for the bulk of chicken imports at 124,837 MT.

Based on BAI data, pork imports grew by 10.73 percent to 316,995 MT from the 286,275 MT recorded in the same period last year. Pork cuts accounted for most of the shipments, followed by offals at 113,851 MT and 112,597 MT, respectively.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/11/ubra-phl-will-have-enough-poultry-this-holiday-season/>

Wholesale price of regular milled rice up 10.5% in August

Ada Pelonia
September 11, 2024

Regular milled rice was more expensive in August, the latest data released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed.

Figures from the PSA indicated that the average wholesale price of regular milled rice rose by 10.5 percent to P46.32 per kilogram in August, from P41.91 per kg a year ago.

The fastest increase in regular milled rice was registered in Cagayan Valley where the price of the staple surged 33.4 percent to P47.55 per kg, from P35.64 per kg in the previous year.

This was followed by Mimaropa, where prices increased by 18.9 percent to P42.43 per kg from last year's P35.70 per kg.

However, the average price in August was 0.4 percent lower than the P46.50 per kilo recorded in July.

Meanwhile, the PSA said well-milled rice jumped 8.9 percent to P49.76 per kilo last month, from P45.68 a year ago.

The fastest increase was recorded in Cagayan Valley and Western Visayas, where prices rose by 15 percent and 16.2 percent, respectively.

In Caraga, the price of well-milled rice in August went up by 13 percent to P50.57 per kg from P44.74 per kg recorded a year ago.

However, the average price of well-milled rice was 0.6 percent lower than the P50.08 per kilo registered in July.

“Wholesale price refers to the price of commodity transacted in bulk for further resale or processing,” the PSA said.

“It is the actual ‘spot’ transaction price received usually by the wholesalers, distributors or marketing agents for large lots but net of discounts, allowances, and rebates.”

The agency said the monthly data on the wholesale selling prices for agricultural commodities were obtained from the results of the Wholesale Selling Price Survey conducted every week of the reference month.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said rice prices remain elevated due to high world prices and the existing inventory of imported staple bought prior to lowering of tariffs. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/30/da-explains-why-rice-prices-stay-high-despite-low-tariffs/>)

He also said the inventory of rice imported in January to June, when tariff was still at 35 percent, will be depleted by October.

“It will take until mid- or the end-October before the old stocks [bought] at high price will run out.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/11/wholesale-price-of-regular-milled-rice-up-10-5-in-august/>

Bees and patrols: How Ugandan farmers guard against coffee theft

BusinessMirror
September 11, 2024

To stop his coffee crops being stolen yet again, Ugandan farmer Charles Waliggo has been waking during the night to patrol his plot. Others are being urged to turn to dogs to guard plantations—or even bees.

The security measures are necessary to stop thieves snatching unharvested beans straight from trees under cover of darkness, a problem that has become much more serious as prices soar. Two of the country's farming associations say coffee theft has hit unprecedented levels this year.

It's another example of how food and drink have become lucrative targets for criminals. In recent years, rising prices and a cost-of-living crisis sparked a string of thefts of everything from African cocoa beans and Spanish olive oil to ham and donuts. Coffee has drawn attention as drought in key grower Vietnam and strong demand squeezed global supply and made it much more expensive.

The raids are “due to the fact that prices of coffee have gone higher than before,” said Ronald Buule, executive director of Uganda's Central Coffee Farmers Association, known as CECOFA. The now common problem in the world's fifth-biggest bean exporter “has created insecurity in coffee farms,” he said.

Global prices of robusta coffee—favored for instant drinks—hit the highest since the 1970s this year, raising costs for roasters and consumers. In Uganda, farm-gate prices for unshelled robusta known as Kiboko jumped as much as 65 percent since the start of the year to a record 7,000 shillings (\$1.89) per kilogram, according to the Uganda Coffee Development Authority.

High prices in Africa's No. 2 grower have made coffee a significant theft target, joining other commodities such as cocoa and vanilla, according to Tony Mugoya, the executive director of Uganda Coffee Farmers Alliance.

It's hard to quantify the size of the problem, because the police force hasn't compiled data on cases dealt with by local authorities and the government hasn't published coffee-theft statistics. But CECOFA and the UCFA say crime is much higher than in previous years.

That's adding to a rise in food crime. Food and beverages accounted for more than a fifth of all products stolen globally last year, up from 17 percent in 2022, according to the British Standards Institution.

Some Ugandan farmers suspect many thefts are committed by local people, often youths, who then sell the beans into the supply chain. The looters—who sometimes damage trees in the process—are not only hurting farmers' income, but also threatening Uganda's efforts to boost output in the coming years.

Security measures

A victim several times, Waliggo woke up most nights during the recently ended harvest to check his crops in Mayirikiti in the central region. About a dozen farms in the village were targeted in the latest harvest period, according to Ibra Ssemanda, a local government official.

During the harvest season CECOFA's Buule, who's also a farmer, has himself had to hire 10 night guards to stay at his two plantations that cover a total of more than 40 acres (16 hectares).

The association recommends that growers invest in fencing, security guards and dogs, and bees to fight crime. More farmers have been keeping apiaries to aid pollination, but the idea is that they will now also scare away thieves worried about being stung if they upset hives.

Some coffee communities are taking other steps to make it harder to profit from crime. In the western region district of Kakumiro, children aren't allowed to sell beans to

middlemen because they can be taken advantage of by thieves, said Taddewo Senyonyi, a farmer who's another victim.

The problem is that many smallholders who live near the poverty line can't afford the extra security expense. For buyers, quality can suffer if thieves take cherries that aren't fully ripe. Plus, some rip off branches to strip beans away from farms, hurting future productivity of trees.

Crime is becoming a bigger problem at a time when the government is trying to boost output and exports. It has distributed millions of free seedlings in recent years to help expand production to 20 million bags by 2030, from less than 7 million bags now as estimated by the US government.

That target could become even more ambitious if thefts keep threatening productivity.

"Certainly thefts will discourage efforts by farmers from investing if something is not done," said Richard Muganzi, sales and marketing manager at the Masaka Cooperative Union, which has about 100,000 members.

Bloomberg News

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/11/bees-and-patrols-how-ugandan-farmers-guard-against-coffee-theft/>

ABANTE TONITE

P21M puslit na sibuyas, carrots nasabat

Nasabat ng Department of Agriculture at Bureau of Customs kahapon ang limang container ng carrots at puting sibuyas na nagkakahalagang P21 milyon sa Subic.

Ayon sa DA, ang mga container ay nasa vessel SITC Licheng at Agosto 15 pa nakadaong sa Port of Subic. Ang carrots at mga sibuyas ay inangkat mula China ng Betron Consumer Goods Trading.

Hiniling ng DA-Bureau of Plant Industry-Plant Quarantine Service sa BoC na mag-inspeksyon sa limang containers. Dineklara ng Beltron na frozen fish egg balls ang laman ng limang container. Nang buksan ang mga ito, 58 toneladang carrots ito at 86 toneladang sibuyas.

Batay sa proseso, kailangang magpakita ng Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearances (SPSICs) mula sa BPI ang mag-aangkat ng mga agricultural food products tulad ng fresh vegetables. Para sa mga processed food items naman tulad ng frozen fish egg balls, ang permit ay sa Food and Drug Administration dapat manggagaling.

Sabi ni BPI Director Gerald Glenn Panganiban, susuriin ang mga kinumpiskang carrot at sibuyas para sa pesticide residues, heavy metals, at microbiological contaminants. Oras na bumagsak ang mga ito sa test, ikokondena na ang mga ito. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/09/11/p21m-puslit-na-sibuyas-carrots-nasabat/>

P42-45 per kilo na bigas kalat na sa mga palengke sa Metro Manila

[Joy Cantos](#)

September 12, 2024 | 12:00am



House Speaker Martin Romualdez and ACT-CIS Representative Erwin Tulfo visit markets in Metro Manila to inspect the price of basic commodities on September 11, 2024

STAR/ Edd Gumban

MANILA, Philippines — Inihayag nitong Miyerkules ng mga grupo ng rice retailers na halos lahat ng palengke sa Metro Manila ay naglalako na ng P42 hanggang P45 kada kilo ng regular at well-milled rice dahil sa inisyatiba ng administrasyon ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr., na babaan ang taripa ng bigas sa bansa sa 15 porsyento.

Bilang patunay, inanyayahan nitong Martes ng umaga ng Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders' Movement (PRISM), isang malaking organisasyon ng mga rice traders, si Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez at iba pang mambabatas para mag-inspeksyon ng presyo ng bigas sa Guadalupe Market sa Makati, Farmers' Market at Nepa QMart sa Quezon City.

Kasama ni Speaker sa pag-iikot sa palengke sina ACT-CIS partylist Reps. Erwin Tulfo at Edvic Yap at Quezon province Rep. Mark Emverga.

“Inimbitahan po namin si Speaker (Romualdez) para sa market visit para ipakita sa kanya na lahat ay nagbebenta na ng P42-P45 kada kilo ng bigas. Ang nakita po namin dito na factor ‘yung pagbaba po ng taripa from 35% to 15%,” ani Orly Panuntag, pangulo ng PRISM.

“So natutuwa po ‘yung mga retailers natin tsaka ‘yung mga consumers po natin meron silang aasahan ngayon na P42 hanggang P45, ibababa pa po namin,” dagdag pa niya.

Ikinalugod naman ni Speaker and kapansin-pansin na agarang pagbaba ng presyo ng mga bigas dahil sa pagbaba ng taripa.

“Nag-iinspect lang tayo minomonitor natin ‘yung presyo ng mga bigas dito talagang makikita natin ang pagbaba ng presyo ng mga bigas sa abot kayang presyo sa masa. Ito ‘yun ng programa ng ating President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., na abot kaya lahat ng presyo,” sinabi ni Speaker Romualdez.

Karamihan naman sa mga tindero at may-ari ng bigasan sa mga naturang palengke ay nagpapasalamat sa pamahalaan dahil sa patuloy na pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas sa mga pamilyan.

“Nagpapasalamat po kami at lalo na higit po sa inyong lahat at may dumating na po na mababa,” ayon kay Rey Panganiban, rice trader

Sinabi naman ni Arnel Figuro, negosyante ng bigas sa Farmers’ Market na maayos daw ang bentahan ngayon simula ng ibaba ang taripa sa bigas.

Ayon naman kay Elaine Cabildo, “Dahil bumaba nga ‘yung bigas marami kaming pwedeng mai-offer na mas mababang bigas kasi nga syempre hirap din sila sa budget kasi nga hindi lang naman bigas ang mahal ngayon.

Kasama ring nag-ikot sa palengke sina DTI Price Control ASec Agaton Uvero, DA Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Services Asec Bebang Guevarra, at DTI representatives Dir. Fhillip Sawali, Div. Chief Rosita Jaleco at Asst. Div. Chief Joel Buag.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/09/12/2384596/p42-45-kilo-na-bigas-kalat-na-sa-mga-palengke-sa-metro-manila>

144 tonelada ng carrots at sibuyas, kinumpiska ng DA at BOC

[Angie dela Cruz](#)

September 12, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Kinumpiska ng mga tauhan ng Department of Agriculture (DA) sa pakikipagtulungan ng Bureau of Customs (BOC) ang 144 tonelada ng carrots at sibuyas na nakasilid sa limang container van na walang sapat na dokumento .

Ang undocumented shipment ng naturang mga gulay na nagkakahalaga ng P21 milyon ay sakay ng barkong SITC Licheng na nakahimpil sa Port of Subic.

Ayon sa DA, ang naturang mga gulay ay galing mula sa China sa pamamagitan ng Betron Consumer Goods Trading.

Personal na pinangunahan ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. ang inspeksiyon sa mga kalakal sa Port of Subic kasama sina BPI Director Glen Panganiban, Customs Deputy Commissioner Juvymax R. Yu at Subic Customs Collector Ricardo U. Morales, ang mga kalakal ay pawang carrots at dilaw na sibuyas pero naideklara ito ng Betron na frozen fish egg balls.

Ani Secretary Tiu laurel, ang importer ng naturang mga produkto ay walang Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearances (SPSIC) mula sa BPI. Kung naideklara naman anyang frozen fish egg balls ang mga produkto ay dapat itong may permits mula sa Food and Drug Administration.

“Clearly, these are smuggled goods that rob our government of tariff revenue, pose a risk to public health, and undermine the livelihood of our vegetable farmers,” sabi ni Secretary Tiu Laurel.

Patong patong na kaso ang kakaharapin ng naturang importer dahil sa kawalan ng kaukulang papeles ng naturang mga agri products.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/metro/2024/09/12/2384615/144-tonelada-ng-carrots-sibuyas-kinumpiska-ng-da-boc>