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THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Thoughts on PBBM's leadership and its impact on MSMEs



[GO NEGOSYO PILIPINAS ANGAT LAHAT!](#) - [Joey Concepcion](#) - The Philippine Star

September 16, 2024 | 12:00am

Fair winds and following seas are every sailor's dream; one cannot ask for better conditions than calm waters and favorable winds guiding the way. Under such conditions, a captain must harness momentum to navigate effectively. I believe President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is doing just that, particularly for our country's micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

In his first two years in power, the President has significantly advanced MSME development. He revived the Presidential MSME Awards – after years of hiatus. The program is a vital incentive for both MSMEs and the government agencies and private organizations supporting them. During the awards, he announced an Executive Order to mobilize agencies for the MSME Development Plan 2023-2028, clarifying roles and procedures for effective collaboration.

He has also made infrastructure development a priority of his administration. Under his leadership, the government completed the building of numerous roads and bridges, enhancing market access for MSMEs, especially in agriculture. He has committed to building more infrastructure – both physical and digital – to facilitate efficient trade and communication among the Philippines' 7,100 islands.

Digitalization is crucial for MSMEs to promote their products and streamline business operations. The President emphasized internet connectivity in the Philippine Development Plan, particularly for remote communities. There are now more platforms and more solutions available to help MSMEs; government, through the Department of Trade and Industry, is now assisting in more market opportunities for MSMEs, thanks to cues from the President's directives.

Access to capital is another key ingredient to MSME success. There are now more financing opportunities for MSMEs, both from traditional banks and other digital financial institutions, making financing more accessible than before. The growing microfinance sector that assists MSMEs in smaller communities through micro loans is a big boost.

Additionally, the distribution of Certificates of Condonation and Release of Mortgages to small farmers is a significant step towards alleviating debt and enhancing agricultural productivity, especially among the small farmers. This initiative aligns with the New Agrarian Emancipation Act, aiming to resolve longstanding financial burdens on agrarian reform beneficiaries. With hope, these will be the initial steps that will bring relief to this long-suffering segment of our society.

This effort to realize a more inclusive society makes me optimistic that we can achieve a prosperous Philippines under a strong, compassionate leadership. Even with the tourism sector – which is delivering beyond its initial targets – the President does not fail to remind and encourage the distribution of benefits across the country and all segments, ensuring that the growth in this sector reaches all Filipinos.

He also thinks like a CEO and this inspires confidence among private sector leaders. He sees well ahead into the future and chooses actions that will deliver the biggest impact, something a CEO would do.

Early in his presidency, he made it his mission to introduce himself and the Philippines to the world. He ignored the naysayers and went to meet with the international community as the Philippines' number one salesman. He attended the World Economic Forum in Davos, where a five-minute chat can lead to billions worth of investments. He goes and visits heads of state, and was a constant presence in ASEAN events.

In my own experience as the CEO of RFM, I know that you don't sit around and wait for investors to come knocking at your door. The Philippines has 114 million shareholders; they are the ones who will ultimately benefit from the President's roadshows.

The integration of the private sector into government decision-making is not new but it is vital. The formation of the Private Sector Advisory Council (PSAC) reflects this collaborative spirit, providing guidance on national priorities such as jobs, health care and digitalization. As the lead for the Jobs sector, I see firsthand how this cooperation can yield impactful results.

Having served in the ASEAN Business Advisory Council for many years, I can tell you that bringing the private sector into the government decision-making process has been

proven successful because the collaboration brings to governance the real-world perspective and expertise that private sector is known for.

When top business leaders – who comprise the members of the PSAC – back the President, it instills investor confidence, ensuring that the Philippines remains an attractive destination for investment.

The President's historic mandate can also be considered a favorable headwind. There's clearly so much more to be done, but the overwhelming mandate will be important if we as a nation are to tackle difficult issues like food security. He has consistently prioritized agriculture, understanding its vital role in our economy. His empathy towards the struggles of ordinary Filipinos, especially concerning essential commodities like rice, demonstrates a commitment to addressing their needs.

The President's appointment of key people to help him run the government – people like DTI's Cris Roque and DepEd's Sonny Angara – reflects his strategic approach to governance. Time and again, he chose individuals who inspire confidence, especially in the private sector, and align with his vision for MSME growth. From the beginning of his presidency, he has declared the importance of the sector that comprises 99 percent of our enterprises and contributes nearly 65 percent of jobs.

By focusing on productivity in the MSME sector, he knows that we can create sustainable job growth and foster economic stability. As the President encourages MSMEs to embrace their role in social transformation, we can look forward to a future where their success translates into broader benefits for all Filipinos, perhaps taking us closer to what the President envisioned when he chose Bagong Pilipinas as his battlecry. Thank you, Mr. President, and a happy birthday.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/09/16/2385505/thoughts-pbbms-leadership-and-its-impact-msmes>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

House plenary debates on P6.3 trillion budget begin

[Delon Porcalla](#) - The Philippine Star

September 16, 2024 | 12:00am



Workers do renovation works around the House of Representatives within the Batasang Pambansa Complex in Quezon City on July 3, 2024.

STAR / Miguel De Guzman

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Finance will be the first government agency that will undergo budget deliberations today when plenary debates start on the P6.352-trillion national budget for 2025 at the House of Representatives.

This will be followed by the Department of Justice and its attached agencies such as the National Bureau of Investigation and Bureau of Immigration, then the National Economic and Development Authority, including its attached agencies, the judiciary and lump sums.

According to Speaker Martin Romualdez, the outlay or the General Appropriations Bill would support the Agenda for Prosperity and “Bagong Pilipinas” programs of President Marcos.

“It will be our instrument in directly helping the poor through various social protection, financial aid and medical programs, and in keeping food prices down, particularly the price of rice which has fallen to P42 a kilo,” he said.

Under its budget deliberation schedule, the House is devoting eight days for plenary debates, which start at 10 in the morning and will last until the agenda for the day is finished.

On deck tomorrow are the Office of the Ombudsman, Commission on Human Rights, including Human Rights Violations' Memorial Commission, and the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Tourism, Department of Labor and Employment, and their attached agencies.

Wednesday will see the House tackling the budgets of the Commission on Elections, Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Trade and Industry and several executive offices and state colleges and universities.

On Thursday, the House will tackle the budgets of the Department of National Defense, Department of Migrant Workers, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and their attached agencies, and budgetary support to a number of government corporations.

On Friday, it will be the turn of the Presidential Communications Office, Department of Science and Technology, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority and more executive offices and government corporations to defend their funding.

Between Sept. 23 and 25, the budgets of the remaining departments and agencies, and executive offices will be discussed including the departments of agriculture, health, energy, education, social welfare and development, and transportation, Civil Service Commission and Commission on Audit.

The recommended reduced funding for the controversial Office of the Vice President will also be tackled on Sept. 23.

It is scheduled to pass the proposed budget on third and final reading on Sept. 25, after tackling funding for the Department of Public Works and Highways, Office of the President and Congress. The turno en contra by the opposition and period of amendments are also scheduled for that day.

Marikina Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo, senior vice chairperson of the House appropriations committee, will take turn in sponsoring the defendin

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/09/16/2385539/house-plenary-debates-p63-trillion-budget-begin>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

3 Central Luzon areas log bird flu cases

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

September 16, 2024 | 12:00am



The DA's attached agency, Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), said cases of avian influenza were reported in Tarlac, Pampanga and Nueva Ecija.

Stock photo by William Moreland via Unsplash

MANILA, Philippines — Bird flu cases have been reported in three provinces in Central Luzon, according to the Department of Agriculture.

The DA's attached agency, Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), said cases of avian influenza were reported in Tarlac, Pampanga and Nueva Ecija.

Some ducks, chickens and turkeys in Tarlac City tested positive for bird flu, the BAI said, adding the disease affected at least seven farmers.

It said ducks in San Luis town in Pampanga and Talavera in Nueva Ecija also tested positive for bird flu.

Meanwhile, the DA said up to 17 provinces and 46 municipalities have recovered from the virus.

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said bird flu spreads among wild aquatic birds worldwide and could infect domestic poultry and other bird and animal species.

Bird flu viruses do not normally infect humans. However, sporadic human infections with avian influenza viruses have occurred.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/09/16/2385566/3-central-luzon-areas-log-bird-flu-cases>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

5 of 41 hogs vaccinated vs ASF died – DA

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

September 16, 2024 | 12:00am



DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the hogs did not die from the effects of the vaccine, but due to pulmonary diseases.

AFP / File

MANILA, Philippines — Five of the 41 hogs covered by the vaccination trial against African swine fever (ASF) in Lobo, Batangas have died, according to the Department of Agriculture.

DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the hogs did not die from the effects of the vaccine, but due to pulmonary diseases.

“Apparently, these pigs have conditions prior to the vaccination. The pigs tested negative for ASF. They died of pulmonary diseases,” De Mesa said.

He said prior to the vaccination, the DA required hogs to undergo testing for ASF.

Only those that tested negative for the virus were vaccinated.

The DA also required hogs to be healthy and the backyard farms to have a good biosecurity.

“Apparently, we were not properly informed (about the condition of the five pigs),” he said.

The DA started vaccinating pigs in Lobo on Aug. 30, using 10,000 doses of ASF vaccine purchased through emergency procurement.

De Mesa did not confirm if the number of hogs inoculated with ASF vaccine has been increased.

Earlier, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. approved the release of P350 million for the procurement of 600,000 doses of ASF vaccine amid reported outbreaks in the country.

Data from the Bureau of Animal Industry showed the number of ASF-affected barangays have increased from 458 to 472.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/09/16/2385578/5-41-hogs-vaccinated-vs-asf-died-da>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Rice prices still high despite lower tariffs

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:30 AM September 16, 2024



Inquirer file photo

MANILA, Philippines — The price of locally produced and imported rice retailed at around P50 a kilo in some public markets in Metro Manila despite lower import duties on the staple, likely due to traders still unloading their stock purchased at the higher tariff rate.

Local regular milled rice was sold from a low of P45 per kilogram to a high of P51 per kg as of Friday, compared to P39 to P45 per kg during the same period last year, according to a price monitoring report by the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Local well-milled rice ranged from P47 to P55 per kg from last year's P41 to P47 per kg.

The DA also noted that imported regular milled rice was priced from P42 to P50 per kg. This variety was not available around the same time a year prior.

Imported well-milled rice was more expensive at P45 to P55 per kg, compared to P45 a kilo in the past year.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said last month that consumers would feel the impact of tariff reduction by October as traders were still disposing of their old stocks which they brought in at higher duties.

“Traders are expected to dispose of their old stocks by about mid-October, which they purchased at higher prices,” he told reporters.

Farm inputs

Tiu Laurel had also said global rice prices remained high amid India’s ban on rice exports while Indonesia and Malaysia were building up their buffer stocks.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Genevieve Velicaria-Guevarra said the agency had provided additional farm inputs to boost production and eventually lower the retail prices of other basic commodities by next year.

The country imported 3.8 million metric tons of rice in 2022 and 3.6 million mt in 2023 under the old tariff rates.

In June, President Marcos signed Executive Order No. 62 which slashed duties on imported rice and retained low tariffs on other commodities such as pork and corn until 2028. His order sought to augment supply, manage prices and temper inflationary pressure of commodities.

The new tariff rates would be applied to imports starting July 5.

Import data

According to Bureau of Plant Industry rice import data, 167,403.84 MT of rice arrived in July, 361,720.20 MT in August and 38,068.02 MT as of Sept. 5. The total amount of imported rice under the new tariff is about 15.7 percent of last year’s imports.

The DA has not said whether the volume of the July-Sept. 5 imports would immediately affect rice prices in the markets this month although it observed a downward trend in prices during a visit to markets including Guadalupe Market, Farmers Market, and Nepa Q Mart.

“A huge factor here was the reduction of rice tariff rates from 35 percent to 11 percent. Our retailers and consumers are happy as they can buy rice for P42 to P45 per kilo,” said Orly Manuntag, founder of Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement.

The DA earlier launched the P29 rice program to sell rice for P29 per kg to vulnerable sectors including senior citizens, single parents, persons with disabilities, and Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiaries.

It also unveiled the Rice-for-All program wherein the general public can purchase local or imported well-milled rice from select Kadiwa sites in Metro Manila for P45 a kilo.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1983544/rice-prices-still-high-despite-lower-tariffs>

BUSINESS WORLD:

PHL wheat imports likely to increase next year — USDA

September 16, 2024 | 12:04 am



MELISSA ASKEW-UNSPLASH

THE Philippines is expected to import more wheat next year due to increasing demand for both milling and animal-feed quality grain, according to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). In a report, the USDA is estimating that wheat imports will rise to 7 million metric tons (MT), up 1.4% against its 6.9 million MT forecast for 2024.

This was also a 16.6% upgrade from the 6 million MT estimate it issued earlier.

For 2024, the USDA raised its estimates for wheat imports to 6.9 million MT from 6.5 million MT previously.

The Philippines typically imports wheat for animal feed, while human-grade varieties go to flour production.

It said that global trade for wheat next year is expected to grow due to increased imports in the region by the Philippines and Vietnam.

“Global consumption is raised on increased feed and residual use in the Philippines, Vietnam, Australia, Canada, and the UK, outweighing lower feed and residual use in the European Union,” the USDA added.

The USDA retained its forecast for Philippine rice imports next year at 4.6 million MT.

The government lowered tariffs on imported rice to 15% from 35% until 2028 through Executive Order No. 62, as an inflation containment measure.

The USDA said Vietnam, the Philippines’ biggest supplier of rice, is expected to increase its overall exports to 8.6 million MT next year. This represented an upgrade from the 8.3 million MT forecast issued earlier.

It cited “large shipments to core markets (serviced by Vietnam), including Indonesia and the Philippines.”

In January, the Philippines and Vietnam signed an agreement giving the Philippines a quota of 1.5 million MT to two million MT of rice annually for five years.

As of Aug. 29, rice imports hit 2.8 million MT, the Bureau of Plant Industry reported. — Adrian H. Halili

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/09/16/621510/phl-wheat-imports-likely-to-increase-next-year-usda/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

EU allows member states to boost payments to farmers after protests

September 16, 2024 | 12:03 am



REUTERS

BRUSSELS — European Union (EU) member states can increase the funds they pay to farmers, the European Commission said Friday, after protests by farmers earlier in the year forced policy makers to scale back climate rules.

The Commission said it would allow EU member states to pay higher advances of Common Agriculture Policy funds to farmers, which would allow them to receive up to 70% of direct payments in advance starting in October, and up to 85% in advance payments for area and animal-based interventions under rural development. Such payments are currently 50% and 75%, respectively.

“EU farmers continue to face liquidity problems, notably due to extreme weather events which have had an impact on yields in recent years, as well as high interest rates on European financial

markets and high prices of agricultural inputs and commodities,” the commission said in a statement.

The Commission has taken similar measures before, notably in 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Earlier this year, farmers blockaded roads to demand action on low incomes, cheap food imports, burdensome regulations, and unfair competition from abroad.

Key portions of EU policy have been impacted as Brussels seeks to assuage farmers. The EU withdrew a law to lower the use of pesticides, delayed a target for farmers to leave some land fallow to increase biodiversity and discarded a goal to reduce farming emissions from its 2040 climate roadmap. — Reuters

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/09/16/621509/eu-allows-member-states-to-boost-payments-to-farmers-after-protests/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Origin of human bird flu case in Missouri still unknown — CDC

September 16, 2024 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

WASHINGTON — Epidemiologists have not yet identified exactly how a person in Missouri contracted bird flu last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said.

The human case was the 14th diagnosed in the US this year. The other 13 cases were among farm workers and linked to bird flu outbreaks on poultry or dairy farms.

The infected individual was admitted to the hospital with symptoms including chest pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, CDC principal deputy director Nirav Shah said on a Thursday call with reporters. It was unclear whether the patient's underlying conditions caused the symptoms or the flu.

The investigation into the origin of the infection is ongoing and the CDC has been unable to determine if the case was related to the current outbreak of bird flu in dairy cattle, Mr. Shah said.

“Right now, evidence points to this being a one-off case,” said Mr. Shah. Missouri has not invited the CDC to conduct an on-site investigation but the CDC is working closely with state health officials on its response to the case, Mr. Shah said.

ADVERTISING

Mr. Shah also said the CDC will work with five commercial laboratory companies — Aegis, ARUP, Ginkgo BioWorks, Labcorp, and Quest — to develop their own diagnostic tests for public health outbreaks, including bird flu.

The USDA said eight dairy herds had been infected with bird flu in California since the first cattle case was identified there on Aug. 30.

Bird flu has infected more than 200 dairy herds in 14 states since March, USDA data showed. The California herds are quarantined and the state is expected to conduct bulk milk testing at dairies within a geographic zone around the affected farms, Eric Deeble, deputy under secretary for marketing and regulatory programs at the USDA, said.

The agency does not know how the virus arrived in California, Mr. Deeble said.

The CDC will launch its program to vaccinate farm workers against the seasonal flu in October, Mr. Shah said. The campaign is meant to prevent dual infection with bird flu and seasonal flu, which could lead to virus mutations. — Reuters

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/09/16/621511/origin-of-human-bird-flu-case-in-missouri-still-unknown-cdc/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Australian farmers demand bigger say in gov't animal welfare, environment policies

September 16, 2024 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

CANBERRA — Hundreds of farmers from across Australia held a protest this week against government farming policies they said were influenced by environmental and animal welfare activists and which were harming their livelihoods.

Australia is one of the world's biggest agricultural exporters and farmers nationwide are increasingly angry with the center-left Labor government that has sought to ban exports of live sheep, restrict water use, and accelerate construction of renewable power and transmission in rural areas.

“We deserve to be respected,” National Farmers’ Federation (NFF) President David Jochinke told a crowd on the lawn in front of Australia’s federal parliament in Canberra. “There are alternative voices that are united against us. We don’t think they are the ones that should be setting the policy,” he said. “We feel like we are getting stifled.”

The government did not send a representative to the rally. Agriculture Minister Julie Collins told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation the government was committed to listening and had helped farmers by expanding overseas market access and investing in biosecurity.

The NFF said more than 2,000 people attended what was its first nationwide rally of farmers in the capital since the 1980s.

The protest is part of a wave of unrest in Europe and elsewhere aimed at governments imposing environmental regulation that farmers say burdens them with red tape and higher costs, as well as limiting their ability to farm.

“Our message is clear: talk to us,” Mr. Jochinke said.

Federal elections are due in Australia by May next year and farm lobby leaders say they will try to eject Labor by raising money and targeting marginal seats.

Opposition leader Peter Dutton told the rally he would reverse a ban on live sheep exports and the opposition agriculture spokesman said he was against water restrictions. “We have your backs,” Mr. Dutton said.

Australian farmers have seen several years of bumper production thanks to plentiful rain, but pessimism is rife. “Under this government there’s no future for agriculture in Australia,” said Will Croker, a 32-year-old livestock farmer from New South Wales. “It’s not right.” — Reuters

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/09/16/621508/australian-farmers-demand-bigger-say-in-govt-animal-welfare-environment-policies/>

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL:

From Local Farms to Global Markets: How Filipino Agriculture Is Going Organic

Sunday, September 15, 2024 Journal Online



Imagine walking through a Filipino farm’s lush, green fields, where rows of rice, bananas, and coffee plants are thriving without a single chemical in sight. You can practically smell the richness of the soil and the freshness of the produce. Now picture this same produce not just feeding local communities, but gracing the tables of health-conscious consumers across the globe. This is the promise of organic farming in the Philippines.

Filipino farmers have been making a significant shift from traditional, chemical-reliant farming methods to organic practices that are healthier for the soil, the environment, and ultimately, the people. Filipino agriculture is slowly but surely making its way from local farms to international shelves, but the journey isn’t without its hurdles.

In this article, we’ll dive deep into why Filipino farmers are going organic, the challenges they face, the opportunities they’re seizing in global markets, and how technology is helping them get there.

Along the way, we'll also explore how this shift benefits not only farmers but the entire ecosystem. Whether you're a consumer, an environmentalist, or someone interested in agriculture, there's something here for you.

The Organic Farming Movement in the Philippines

The shift towards organic farming in the Philippines has been gaining momentum for over a decade, thanks to growing consumer demand and government backing.

Key Drivers Behind the Organic Movement:

- **Health Concerns:** Consumers are increasingly aware of the dangers of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, driving demand for organic produce.
- **Environmental Impact:** Organic farming helps reduce soil degradation and water contamination, making it a more sustainable choice.
- **Market Opportunities:** The global market for organic products is booming, and Filipino farmers are positioning themselves to tap into this lucrative sector.

The Challenges of Going Organic

The road to organic farming is not an easy one, especially for Filipino farmers who often face financial and logistical challenges. For many, the benefits are clear, but the path to achieving those benefits can be steep.

Major Challenges Include:

1. **Initial Costs:** The shift from conventional farming to organic methods involves significant upfront costs. Farmers must invest in organic seeds, natural fertilizers, and eco-friendly pest control methods. These are often more expensive and labor-intensive than their chemical counterparts.
2. **Technical Knowledge:** Organic farming requires a deep understanding of soil health, crop rotation, and natural pest management. Many farmers lack access to the necessary training and resources, making it difficult to transition smoothly.
3. **Certification Hurdles:** For Filipino organic products to be recognized globally, they must meet strict international certification standards. Obtaining these certifications is often a costly and time-consuming process that small-scale farmers struggle to navigate.
4. **Infrastructure and Market Access:** Farmers, especially in rural areas, face issues in getting their products to market. Transportation and storage facilities are often inadequate, making it difficult to sell fresh organic produce both locally and internationally.

Organic Farming Methods in the Philippines

Once farmers overcome the initial challenges, they adopt a range of organic practices that improve both crop yield and soil health. Organic farming in the Philippines is not just about abandoning chemical fertilizers; it's about embracing holistic, sustainable methods that benefit both the

environment and the economy. Much like how various industries, such as the [inclave.casino](#), are adapting to more modern and eco-friendly approaches.

Common Organic Farming Techniques:

- **Natural Fertilizers:** Farmers use compost, manure, and other natural materials to enrich the soil without the use of synthetic chemicals.
- **Pest Control:** Instead of harmful pesticides, organic farmers use biological pest control, like introducing beneficial insects or using natural repellents.
- **Crop Rotation:** This technique helps maintain soil fertility by alternating the types of crops grown on a piece of land, preventing soil depletion.
- **Intercropping:** Growing multiple crops together to naturally reduce pests and diseases while enhancing soil health.

Global Opportunities for Filipino Organic Farmers

One of the most exciting aspects of the organic farming movement in the Philippines is its potential to connect local farmers with global markets. As organic products become more popular worldwide, Filipino farmers have a unique opportunity to export their goods to regions with high demand, such as Europe, North America, and parts of Asia.

Top Organic Products for Export:

- **Coconut Products:** The Philippines is one of the largest producers of coconuts in the world, and organic coconut oil is highly sought after in international markets.
- **Bananas:** Known for their quality, Filipino bananas are already a major export, and organic bananas are carving out a niche.
- **Rice:** Organic rice is growing in popularity, especially in health-conscious markets where consumers are willing to pay a premium for organic grains.
- **Coffee:** Specialty organic coffee from the Philippines is gaining recognition in global markets, especially among artisanal coffee shops and retailers.

Environmental and Social Benefits of Organic Farming

The environmental benefits of organic farming are numerous, and in the Philippines, these benefits extend beyond the farm itself.

Key Benefits Include:

- **Soil Health:** Organic farming improves soil fertility over time, making it possible for future generations to continue farming the land productively.
- **Water Conservation:** By avoiding chemical runoff, organic farming protects water sources from contamination, which is vital in a country like the Philippines that experiences both droughts and typhoons.

- Biodiversity: Organic farms support greater biodiversity, including insects, birds, and other wildlife, contributing to a healthier ecosystem.

The Role of Technology and Innovation

In today's digital age, technology is playing an increasingly important role in helping Filipino farmers transition to and sustain organic practices.

Innovations Supporting Organic Farming:

- Precision Agriculture: Tools that help farmers monitor soil health and crop conditions allow for more efficient and sustainable farming practices.
- Digital Marketplaces: Online platforms are connecting farmers directly with global buyers, reducing middlemen and increasing profits for farmers.
- Blockchain for Traceability: Blockchain technology is being used to ensure the authenticity of organic products, providing transparency from farm to table and building consumer trust.

Conclusion

The journey of Filipino agriculture from local farms to global markets through organic farming is both challenging and rewarding. With the support of government policies, technological innovations, and growing global demand, Filipino farmers are making strides toward sustainability and market competitiveness. While the challenges are significant—from certification costs to market access—the benefits for the environment, the economy, and the farmers themselves are undeniable.

In summary, as Filipino agriculture continues to go organic, it's not just about feeding local communities; it's about positioning the country as a key player in the global organic market. And as more consumers turn to organic produce, both at home and abroad, the future of organic farming in the Philippines looks bright.

<https://journal.com.ph/from-local-farms-to-global-markets-how-filipino-agriculture-is-going-organic/>

Rice imports spike 20% after tariff cut

By Janine Alexis Miguel

September 16, 2024

RICE imports hit 2.9 million metric tons (MT) in the first week of September, 20 percent higher than the 2.4 million MT in 2023, according to data from the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In its latest report, the DA's Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) said from September 1 to 5 alone, rice shipments from abroad reached 38,068 MT, while 361,724 MT was recorded a month earlier.

Data also showed the average monthly arrival of rice stood at 400,000 MT in the earlier half of 2024.

In terms of market prices, the DA said it was seeing a downward trend in some public markets across Metro Manila, such as Guadalupe in Makati, as well as in Farmers and Nepa Q Mart in Quezon City, where well-milled rice retailed at P45 per kilo.

The agency earlier noted the public might be able to buy the staple at lower prices as imported rice with lower tariffs comes in. Last June, the National Economic and Development Authority slashed duties on imported rice to 15 percent from the previous 35 percent to "drive down" retail prices in the country.

The latest rice import volume corresponds to 3,957 sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances issued by the BPI to accredited traders.

The report also showed Vietnam remained the top rice exporter to the Philippines during the period, shipping over 2.26 million MT of the grain or around 78 percent of the total imports.

Next is Thailand, with 383,230 MT, followed by Pakistan, with 156,244 MT, and Myanmar, with 67,315 MT.

The remaining volumes came from India, China, Japan, Cambodia, Italy and Spain.

In 2023, inbound shipments of the staple totaled 3.6 million MT, down 5.9 percent from the record-high 3.82 million MT logged in 2022. For this year, the DA projects rice imports not exceeding last year's import volume.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) said the Philippines could import less rice this year due to slower purchases in the global market. In its monthly report, the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service projected the Philippines' rice import volume to reach 4.6 million MT for 2024, smaller than its previous projection of 4.7 million MT.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier said that the country's rice imports were unlikely to reach the US projection. He said that the previous 4.7-million MT estimate of the USDA might be a bit high and could be "the worst-case scenario."

Nonetheless, the Philippines still ranks as the world's top rice importer. Vietnam followed with an estimated 2.9 million MT and the European Union with 2.2 million MT.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/16/business/top-business/rice-imports-spike-20-after-tariff-cut/1971758>

Soft loans for farmers

By **Malaya Business Insight**

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THE nation depends on farmers for food. And farmers have to survive in the harsh environment that nature provides. While the Philippines is a tropical country with plenty of rich topsoil in its mountains and plains, our farmers still need financing to be able to adequately perform and produce better crops. They need good quality seeds, both organic and inorganic fertilizers, farm machinery, pesticides and other farm inputs. And all these cost money.

While the Agri-Agra Law requires all banks to lend 25 percent of their total loan portfolios on the countryside (15 percent for agriculture and 10 percent for agrarian reform projects), many commercial banks do not comply. They would rather pay penalties of almost P2 billion a year just to dodge the law that seeks to scale up agriculture.

Instead of lending to agriculture, which ramps up physical production, the banks buy government securities or T-bills, which only help shore up the usual deficit spending of the government to pay for public services. Banks would rather give loans to condominium developers than to farmers because, they say, they are more assured of repayment.

‘... there is no recognition and assistance more palpable than giving them easy access to financing.’

In the case of agrarian reform beneficiaries, even if they already own the lands they till, without financing and other support services, what they own are just pieces of paper called Certificate of Land Ownership Award, but these cannot produce anything and are not effective negotiable instruments.

It is thus a big deal for rice farmers when President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Friday unveiled the government’s low-interest credit line that rice farmers can use to buy seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and other farm inputs. On his 67th birthday, the President launched in Nueva Ecija the Department of Agriculture’s “Agri-Puhunan at Pantawid Program (APP)” and oversaw the distribution of 9,832 certificates of condonation with the release of mortgage (Cocrom) covering P277 million in debts of land reform beneficiaries.

The President led the distribution of “intervention monitoring cards” to select rice farmers in Guimba and Palayan City in Nueva Ecija, which can be used to access low interest loans to purchase farm inputs and pay for services from accredited merchants.

The APP program offers a combination of low-interest loans and a monthly subsistence allowance for rice farmers, using an initial funding of P3 billion from the Department of Agriculture and the Development Bank of the Philippines. For the dry cropping season, the APP will open credit lines to farmers and cooperatives behind 50,000 hectares of rice in Luzon. It targets to reach rice farmers tilling 1.2 million hectares nationwide.

A rice farmer tilling one hectare of farmland will receive P58,000. This includes an P8,000 monthly subsistence allowance to be given for four months, and a P14,500 government subsidy per hectare.

“I am aware that despite the government’s programs, many of you are still struggling and are forced to take on loans with high interest rates just to buy seeds, fertilizers and pesticides,” the Chief Executive said.

He assured farmers that the government will continue promoting the welfare, rights and improvement of the agriculture sector. He said farmers should be recognized and aided as they carry out their role in ensuring food security for the country. To this, we may add that there is no recognition and assistance more palpable than giving them easy access to financing.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_opinion/soft-loans-for-farmers/

BPI: Rice import arrivals hit nearly 3MMT in September

Ada Pelonia
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A worker at a rice warehouse in Divisoria, Manila, unloads sacks of grain as rice tariff discussions persist. The Department of Agriculture has indicated it won't recommend raising tariffs on imported rice in the upcoming review of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s Executive Order 62, which reduced the rate from 35 percent to 15 percent. The EO mandates a review every four months.

Imported rice that arrived in the Philippines reached nearly 3 million metric tons (MMT) as of September 5, data from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) showed.

Figures from the attached agency of the Department of Agriculture indicated that total imports from January 1 to September 5 reached 2.9 MMT.

Over 2.26 MMT of rice shipments came from Vietnam, which maintained the top spot as the country's source of imported rice. This was followed by Thailand which accounted for 383,230.74 metric tons (MT).

BPI data showed that the Philippines also imported rice from other countries like Pakistan (156,244.48 MT), Myanmar (67,315 MT), and India (21,910.54 MT).

Rice imports started to pick up after shipments in July slowed to 167,403.84 MT following the implementation of Executive Order (EO) 62 which lowered the tariffs to 15 percent and took effect on July 7.

Rice arrivals in August reached 361,724.20 MT. This was lower than the average shipments from the first semester at 390,065.93 MT.

Meanwhile, BPI data showed that BLY Agri Venture Trading led the 154 rice importers with a total volume of 200,946.99 MT.

Orison Free Enterprise Inc. trailed behind at 166,095.45 MT followed by Macman Rice and Corn Trading at 135,163.30 MT.

Data from the attached agency of the DA also showed that it approved and issued 6,637 sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs) which covered the importation of 6.83 MMT of rice.

Rice importers should secure an SPSIC from the BPI before bringing in foreign rice stocks.

An SPSIC would certify that an inbound shipment is safe for human and animal consumption and would not bring in any pests that could be detrimental to the local agriculture sector.

Earlier, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the government is still expecting a reduction in the price of rice. He noted that retail prices of the price are declining.

The prevailing price of imported well-milled rice in selected Metro Manila markets reached P48.5 per kilogram while regular milled stood at P42 per kg as of September 13, based on the DA's price monitoring.

For local well-milled rice, the DA's monitoring showed that the prevailing price was P50 per kilogram while regular milled reached P48 per kg.

Image credits: [Nonie Reyes](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/16/bpi-rice-import-arrivals-hit-nearly-3mmt-in-september/>

PHL seen buying more imported corn, wheat

Ada Pelonia
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The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) adjusted upwards its corn imports forecast for the Philippines this year.

The Philippines, which was struck by El Niño and continues to grapple with fall armyworms, could import 1.3 million metric tons (MMT) in 2024, according to the USDA. The figure is higher than the initial estimate of 1.1 MMT.

“Global imports are forecast up on increases for China, India, Mexico, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Venezuela,” the USDA report read.

For next year, the USDA said the Philippines will also import more corn, estimated at 1.35 MMT, due to lower carryover stock. However, global imports for next year will decline due to the reduced forecasts for Canada, China and Iran.

“Global imports are forecast down as reduced forecasts for Canada, China, and Iran more than offset a raise to the European Union, India, Mexico, and the Philippines.”

Meanwhile, the USDA increased the country’s forecast for wheat imports next year to 7 MMT driven by stronger demand for milling and feed quality wheat.

“Global consumption is raised this month on increased feed and residual use in the Philippines, Vietnam, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, outweighing lower feed and residual use in the European Union,” the report read.

“Global trade is adjusted upward due to increased imports for the Philippines, the European Union, and Vietnam.”

The USDA-Foreign Agricultural Service in Manila (USDA-FAS Manila) said in its recent report that the country's corn production in the marketing year (MY) 2024-2025 may decline due to fall armyworms infesting local farms.

“FAS Manila forecasts lower MY 2024/25 corn production as multiple producers and industry contacts report reduced area planted and ongoing issues with Fall Army Worm,” the report read. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/12/phl-corn-production-seen-declining-on-fall-armyworm-damage-report/>)

The USDA-FAS Manila projected that local corn production in MY 2024-2025 would decline by 2.38 percent to 8.2 MMT from 8.4 MMT in the previous MY.

In June, BusinessMirror reported that fall armyworms devastated corn fields in the Caraga region. The infestation was attributed by a crop protection specialist to temperature changes. Figures from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that corn production in April to June fell by 20.3 percent to 1.174 MMT, from last year's 1.473 MMT.

“The adverse weather condition is the biggest factor behind the decline along with the delay in planting,” PhilMaize President Romualdo Elvira Jr. told the BusinessMirror last month.

Figures from the PSA showed that the country's farm output contracted by 3.3 percent in the second quarter due to the weather phenomenon.

Crop production, which amounted to P220.04 billion, declined annually by 8.6 percent, with the value of corn production posting a 20.3-percent decline.

Despite this, Elvira said the development is not yet alarming. “We will have to wait for the harvest because some farmers planted in July. Maybe in the third quarter we can see the picture and by then we will know the actual situation.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/16/phl-seen-buying-more-imported-corn-wheat/>

SRA on alert for possible lahar flows from Mt. Kanlaon

Ada Pelonia
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The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) is on alert due to possible lahar flows which could threaten sugar plantations near the restive Kanlaon Volcano.

The volcano, which recently spewed ash, has been under close watch after it exhibited increasing unrest since last week. Kanlaon straddles the provinces of Negros Oriental and Negros Occidental—the country’s top sugar producer.

According to SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona, the fields in its research station La Granja Agricultural Research and Extension Center (LGAREC) in Negros Occidental were clear of ash owing to heavy rainfall.

“There is little to no sulfur smell as well. We believe this is due to the rainfall which prevented the ash from spreading,” Azcona told the BusinessMirror.

However, the SRA chief said heavy rains brought by tropical storm Bebinca prompted the agency to remain vigilant due to the possibility of lahar—the volcanic mudflow spurred by incessant rains.

“The LGAREC station saw very minimal ashfall but because of the heavy rainfall, we are wary of the lahar flows.”

Despite this, Azcona made an assurance that the agency is prepared to deal with the lahar flows.

“We are monitoring Kanlaon’s activities so we can inform our farmers in case there is a need to evacuate; we are assisting the local government,” he said. “In case LGAREC

will be considered as part of the safe zone, plans are in place to use the facility as shelter for affected farmers.”

The SRA said the volcanic ash from Mt. Kanlaon’s eruption last June increased acidity in sugarcane leaves and ground soil in affected areas.

About 23,000 hectares in four sugar mill districts might have been affected by the volcanic eruption, SRA said.

The agency noted the pH level which would indicate the level of acidity revealed a 4.14 pH on sugar cane leaves and 5.06 pH in the soil the morning after the ash fall.

This showed acidity as compared to the 6.48 pH from the ground testing last week.

“With the current results after the ash fall, if this will not be washed out by rains, we will need soil rejuvenation in affected sugar lands to bring it back to the ideal state and that is long term,” Azcona said in a statement.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/16/sra-on-alert-for-possible-lahar-flows-from-mt-kanlaon/>