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Ex-DA chief to NEDA: Explain why EO 62 did not decrease rice retail price

BY JEL SANTOS

Sep 22, 2024 09:09 AM



(ARNOLD QUIZOL/MB FILE PHOTO)

Former agriculture secretary, Leonardo Montemayor said National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arnesio Balisacan should explain to the public why the NEDA-backed Executive Order (EO) No. 62 “failed” to decrease the retail price of rice in the market.

Montemayor noted that 96 percent of the imported rice arrivals are already out in the market.

“He should explain why the NEDA-recommended EO 62 is not working (reducing rice prices as promised),” he told the Manila Bulletin.

According to the former Department of Agriculture (DA) chief, 811,960 metric tons (MT) of rice at 15 percent tariff have arrived in the country as of Sept. 16.

The NEDA chief, he said, should visit wet markets and rice farms across the country to understand the true situation—declining palay prices and persistently high rice prices—and propose solutions.

“Also, he should advise the PPA (Philippine Ports Authority) and DA on how to address port congestion/cargo withdrawal issues,” he said.

Farmers’ group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) said local farmers are now complaining about the ₱4 to ₱5 per kilo decrease in the farmgate price of “palay” (unmilled rice).

Despite this decrease in the farmgate of unmilled rice, the group noted that the rice retail prices have not fallen because the increased profits are benefiting exporting countries and importers.

Meanwhile, Montemayor doubts that the 20 million kilos or 20,000 tons of imported rice in the pier has any impact on market prices.

DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. had earlier called on the PPA to expedite the movement of nearly a thousand container vans filled with imported rice. Over 888 shipping vans contain around 20 million kilograms of rice now in the container yards of Manila ports, PPA data showed.

“It is less than four percent of the 530,000 that arrived July-August at 15 percent tariff. Ninety-six percent of the arrivals are already out in the market,” said the former DA chief.

On June 20, President Marcos enacted EO 62, lowering rice tariffs from 35 percent to 15 percent. This led to the influx of imported rice into the country.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/22/ex-da-chief-to-neda-explain-why-eo-62-did-not-decrease-rice-retail-price>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

4 Negros Occidental LGUs declare state of calamity

[Gilbert Bayoran](#) - The Philippine Star

September 22, 2024 | 12:00am



The municipality of Valladolid joined San Enrique and Hinigaran towns and La Carlota city in declaring a state of calamity as recommended by their disaster risk reduction and management councils.

PNA / File photo

BACOLOD CITY, Philippines — Four local government units in Negros Occidental declared their areas under a state of calamity, citing the damage caused by the enhanced southwest monsoon.

The municipality of Valladolid joined San Enrique and Hinigaran towns and La Carlota city in declaring a state of calamity as recommended by their disaster risk reduction and management councils.

Based on the report of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, the damage to the agriculture sector, including livestock and fisheries, reached P149.738 million in Negros Occidental.

Irene Bel Ploteña, Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management officer, pegged the damage on agricultural crops at P146.184 million, P1.781 million in fisheries and P1.772 million in livestock as of Sept. 20.

Ploteña also reported that 203,091 persons in 259 barangays were affected by the inclement weather.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/09/22/2386993/4-negros-occidental-lgus-declare-state-calamity>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Delays in landing imports also affecting shipments of meat

September 22, 2024 | 8:24 pm



PHOTO COURTESY OF ICTSI

PORT CONGESTION is also delaying the unloading of frozen meat, an importers group said, potentially adding another imported commodity to the list of items that cannot be brought to market promptly to mitigate high prices.

“One of the reasons for port congestion is that the containers are not released and unloaded (immediately),” Meat Importers and Traders Association President Emeritus Jesus C. Cham said.

Last week, Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. cited the need for more ports to fast-track the landing of imported farm goods.

Mr. Cham added that the requirement that shipments bear the seals of the National Meat Inspection Service, and the Bureau of Customs have also caused further delays.

“(Now) they are talking about pre-border inspection, cross-border electronic invoicing, and then you have the cold examination facilities in agriculture (CEFA), these are additional (requirements),” he said.

The CEFA’s are intended to ensure that imports are disease-free, and to mitigate the risks from smuggled farm goods.

All imported agri-fishery products are to undergo a 100% examination by the various food regulators overseeing animal industry, plant industry, fisheries and aquatic resources, and meat.

Meat imports rose 9.64% by volume year on year in the first half, led by pork, chicken, and beef, the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) reported.

Shipments of imported meat amounted to 647.75 million kilograms during the first six months.

Mr. Laurel has cited the congested ports as delaying rice imports from reaching the market, blunting the intended impact of lower tariffs in containing rice prices.

Mr. Laurel had called for the Philippine Ports Authority to fast track the release of container vans stalled in Manila. About 888 shipping containers holding about 20,000 metric tons of rice have not yet been released.

“The delay in releasing the imported rice has raised concerns over food security, especially as the country faces ongoing inflation pressures,” the Department of Agriculture (DA) said in a statement.

In June, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. signed Executive Order No. 62 which lowered the tariff on imported rice to 15% from 35% until 2028, citing the need to stabilize rice prices. The order took effect in July.

“It is doubtful whether the 20 million kilos or 20,000 MT in the pier has any impact on prices. It is less than 4% of the 530,000 MT that arrived in the July-August at 15% tariff; 96% of the arrivals are already out in the market,” Federation of Free Farmers National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said via Viber.

Rice imports have totaled 3.01 million MT as of Sept. 12, according to data from the Bureau of Plant Industry.

Leonardo A. Lanzona, an economics professor at the Ateneo de Manila, said that the delay in landing goods is due partly to importers waiting for more favorable prices.

“Importers seem to have contributed little to the price decreases as their goods are stuck in ports. If the government subsidizes the farmers, instead of lowering tariffs and improving port infrastructure, the rice producers and consumers are protected from these importers who wish to manipulate prices,” he said via Messenger chat.

Mr. Laurel has said that the DA is studying developing 17 ports with private partners that will specialize in handling agricultural shipments.

Mr. Montemayor added that prices could drop with the influx of palay (unmilled rice) during the dry season harvest.

“It doesn’t make sense why they will hold on to these stocks when prices will foreseeably go down when new harvests come in,” Mr. Montemayor added.

“By January, we will have a lot of stocks because of the fresh harvests in September-November, plus imports at 15% (tariff). Prices will go down even without the tariff cut, not because of it,” he said.

The DA has said that the lower tariffs on rice would lead to a P5 to P7 per kilogram drop in imported rice prices. The impact on prices is expected to start showing up in mid-October, but more significant effects could be seen by January. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/22/623106/delays-in-landing-imports-also-affecting-shipments-of-meat/>

REMATE:

Delay sa mga kargamentong bigas ‘di dahil sa port congestion – BOC

September 22, 2024 12:07



MANILA, Philippines – Nilinaw ng Bureau of Customs (BOC) nitong Sabado, Setyembre 21 na ang pagkaantala sa mga kargamento ng bigas ay hindi dahil sa congestion sa Manila ports kundi dahil sa pending requirements na kailangang i-comply ng mga consignee.

Ito ay kasunod ng pangamba ng posibleng delay sa kargamento na maaaring makaapekto sa presyo ng bigas dahil sa unreleased rice shipments.

“[T]he rice shipments are ready for release once consignees fulfill their responsibilities, and the accumulation at the ports is not due to any delay caused by congestion,” saad sa pahayag ng BOC.

Ayon sa BOC, nasa 258 shipping containers na may bigas ang nananatili pa rin sa Port of Manila kung saan 237 sa mga ito ang cleared for release na sa pagbabayad ng duties at taxes, habang ang nalalabing 21 container ay ipinoproseso pa rin para ma-clear matapos ang pagpresenta ng Goods Declaration noong Biyernes.

Samantala, nananatili ang 630 rice containers sa Manila International Container Port kung saan 492 ang cleared for release na at 138 ang pending pa.

Nilinaw naman ng BOC na walang kargamento ng bigas ang lumampas na sa 30-day period containment sa mga pantalan, na idedeklara ng ahensya bilang abandoned kung magkaganun.

Sa mandato ng Section 1129(d) o Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, ang kargamento ay dapat ma-claim sa loob ng 30 araw at ma-clear mula sa pagbabayad ng duties at taxes.

Hinimok ni BOC Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio ang consignees na pirmahan na ang mga requirement na kailangan para i-release ang mga kargamento, at sinabing “[t]he BOC stands ready to enforce abandonment proceedings as mandated by law if goods remain unclaimed.”

Hinimok naman ng Department of Agriculture ang Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) noong Huwebes na pabilisin na ang paglalabas ng mahigit 800 container vans na kargado ng mga bigas sa Manila ports sa loob ng ilang buwan. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/delay-sa-mga-kargamentong-bigas-di-dahil-sa-port-congestion-boc/>

ABANTE:

DA sisilipin kalidad ng natenggang bigas sa North Harbor

Abante News

• September

22,

2024



Sisilipin ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang mga nakatenggang bigas sa North Harbor, Manila kung ligtas pang kainin ang mga ito dahil sa matagal na pagkakaimbak sa mga container van.

Ayon kay Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, mahalagang masuri ang 20,000 tonelada ng imported na bigas na hindi pa nailabas sa pier dahil baka may amag o binubukbok na ang mga ito.

Mahalagang matiyak ang kaligtasan ng publiko sa sandaling mailabas ang tinatayang isang libong container vans na naglalaman ng inangkat na bigas.

“Pupunta ang ating Bureau of Land Industry para buksan ang ilang container vans upang makita kasi concerned din kami sa food safety baka mamaya iyong mga nandoon ay may problema na lalo na iyong matagal na naimbak doon sa ating mga pantalan,” ani De Mesa.

Nagpasalamat si De Mesa sa Philippine Ports Authority dahil sa mabilis na pag-aksiyon sa mga nakatenggang container van na naglalaman ng inangkat na bigas. (Aileen Taliping)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/09/22/da-sisilipin-kalidad-ng-natenggang-bigas-sa-north-harbor/>

SRA hikes import fees for artificial sweetener

By Eugene Adiong
September 22, 2024

BACOLOD CITY — The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) has increased import clearance fees for high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) from P1.50 to P30 per equivalent bag of sugar to curb the use of the artificial sweeteners.

In early 2017, SRA charged companies that import sweeteners made from corn starch at P30 per bag but this was lowered a month later to P1.50 per bag.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said the increase of import clearance fees for HFCS was unanimously passed by the Sugar Board last month and forms part of Sugar Order 4.

The issue of artificial sweeteners was raised by United Sugar Producers Federation (Unifed) President Manuel Lamata, along with the other sugar leaders in Luzon and Mindanao, to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. in early August.

"As a result of that meeting and upon orders from the DA (Department of Agriculture), the SRA immediately acted on the concern. Thus, while collection of data on the use of artificial sweeteners is ongoing, we discovered this and decided to immediately raise the SRA fees for HFCS," Azcona said.

Another sugar order is being drafted based on the August 6 meeting between Tiu Laurel and other sugar stakeholders, millers, refiners, farmers, where Unifed, the country's largest independent sugar planters' group, raised the alarm on the entry of "other sugars."

"This entails requiring importers of items under HS1702 to secure an import clearance from SRA and this has been under board discussion since August," Azcona said.

He added that it has come to his attention that a similar letter addressed to Laurel was sent by a group called the Sugar Council and the National Congress of Unions in the Sugar Industry of the Philippines (Nacusic) this week, and "we welcome that more stakeholders are actually concerned about this issue and has decided to support the alarms initially raised by other sugar federations."

In fact, the alleged volume of imports under HS1702 is estimated to be around 200,000 tons, much higher than what some federations say, and we continue to verify the data as we have seen that this has been happening as far back as 10 years.

"This will give us an accurate view and determine whether these other sugars have caused the demand for sugar to decline in the past few years," Azcona added.

"Nevertheless, it is a positive note that we are all together in supporting an issue that can be detrimental to the sugar industry as he encouraged united participation from all sectors to speed up resolution to any issues arising in the future."

Earlier, in a letter to Tiu Laurel, who is the concurrent chairman of the Sugar Board, the Sugar Council and the Nacusip jointly raised their "serious concern over a matter of great consequence to the future of the sugarcane industry — the importation and use of artificial sweeteners."

They pointed out that sucralose, aspartame and acesulfame potassium enjoy zero tariff under the Asean Trade in Goods Agreement, compromising the ability of locally produced sugar to compete in the market, especially in the face of rising production costs.

At the labor front, the group is worried that displacement of locally produced sugar by artificial sweeteners could result to widespread displacement of sugarcane farmworkers, sugar mill workers and biofuel workers in the sugarcane industry, as well as the degradation of the livelihood of families of agrarian reform beneficiaries.

They pointed out that the repercussions on industry workers and marginal farmers are staggering and beyond imagination, particularly the possible recurrence of insurgency in the countryside because of rural unemployment and poverty.

The Sugar Council represents the Confederation of Sugar Producers' Associations Inc. headed by Aurelio Gerardo Valderrama Jr., the National Federation of Sugarcane Planters headed by Enrique Rojas and the Panay Federation of Sugarcane Farmers headed by Danilo Abelita.

Headed by Roland de la Cruz, Nacusip is the largest group of labor unions and agrarian reform beneficiaries associations in the country.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/22/regions/sra-hikes-import-fees-for-artificial-sweetener/1973224>

DA lauds PPA's prompt response vs. possible hoarding of imported rice

[Stephanie Sevillano / PNA](#)
[September 22, 2024](#)

The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Friday lauded the prompt action of the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) against the possible hoarding of some consignees of imported rice.

“Nagpapasalamat kami sa (We thank the) Philippine Ports Authority, sa pangunguna ni (under the leadership of) General Manager Jay Santiago sa mabilis, agarang pagkilos base doon sa impormasyon na binigay ng Kagawaran ni (for their swift, immediate action based on the information provided by the department of) Secretary (Francisco) Tiu Laurel,” DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said during the Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon briefing.

Tiu Laurel earlier disclosed that at least 888 shipping vans of imported rice have been staying in ports in Manila for months.

De Mesa noted that these containers have more than 20,000 metric tons, or some 20 million kilograms, of rice.

“Posibleng ano ito ay maging hoarding na tinatawag kasi mayroong mga ilan mayroon nang nine months nandiyan (Possibly, this might be a hoarding because some have been there for nine months),” he said.

“Ang ginagawa kasi daw apparently nitong mga consignee na ito (what these consignees are allegedly doing is) they want to wait para mas mataas ang presyo ng bigas para lalong lumaki iyong kita nila – so, hindi tama iyon (for the increase in rice prices to earn more profits, so, that’s not right) and that may constitute as a hoarding,” De Mesa added.

For its part, the PPA assured that there’s no port congestion considering their 70 percent yard utilization.

Then PPA also noted that the dwell time or the period of stay of containers in the container yard is only around 5.4 days, with at least 700 containers already given clearance for release to the rice consignees.

De Mesa, meanwhile, said the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) will have its inspection on the said containers to assess the quality of the imported rice and ensure food safety.

On Thursday, Tiu Laurel requested the PPA to give priority to the release of similar shipments to prevent possible price spikes in the market.

“We respectfully urge the PPA to prioritize the movement of these rice stocks to help increase supply for this essential food staple and potentially lower retail prices,” he said in a statement.

As of Thursday, the prevailing price range of imported well-milled rice in Metro Manila is pegged at PHP45 per kilogram to PHP55/kg; while PHP42/kg to PHP50/kg for imported regular-milled rice.

The local well-milled rice, however, is set at PHP47/kg. to PHP55/kg., and PHP45/kg to PHP51/kg for local regular-milled rice. (PNA)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/22/da-lauds-ppas-prompt-response-vs-possible-hoarding-of-imported-rice/>

Soggy Asia coffee crop means world's caffeine fix to stay pricey

Bloomberg News
September 22, 2024

Any hopes that a flood of coffee exports from Asia's major growers would take the heat out of a blistering rally that's pushed robusta prices to the highest since the 1970s are fading fast.

Vietnam produces around a third of the worldwide supply of the variety that's mostly used for instant drinks and espresso blends, but a drought followed by weeks of heavy rain has hit the nation's coffee belt hard just before harvesting that starts in October.

The climatic extremes, and a shrinkage in the amount of land devoted to coffee growing, will cut the country's harvest by about 10 percent to 15 percent this season, said Trinh Duc Minh, chairman of the Buon Ma Thuot Coffee Association in the biggest coffee-growing province of Dak Lak.

"The drought has caused the trees to produce less beans, and the beans are also smaller," he said. "The rains will hinder farmers from picking the beans and drying their coffee, while also causing transport difficulties."

More than 95 percent of Vietnam's coffee output next season will be robusta, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

The growing popularity of instant and grab-and-go coffee drinks and weather-hit supply has spurred a more than doubling of robusta prices over the past year. It's now almost as expensive as the premium arabica variety, which has also rallied sharply. Volcafe Ltd., a major coffee trader, is forecasting a hefty global robusta deficit in the 2024/25 season that starts in October, the fourth annual shortfall in a row.

In Indonesia—which supplies around a 10th of the world’s robusta—it’s rising domestic demand rather than problems with the weather that look set to limit relief to global markets.

Output may reach 10 million 60-kilogram bags this year, which would be 14 percent higher than 2023, said Moelyono Soesilo, the head of downstream coffee at the Association of Indonesian Coffee Exporters and Industries. However, exports are likely to remain steady at about 250,000 tons due to a surge in local consumption, he said.

The amount of acreage in Vietnam used to grow coffee has been declining due to farmers switching to alternative crops like durian and avocados over the last few years. Reduced groundwater and shade also pose long-term challenges as many Vietnamese farmers rely on wells for irrigation and forest cover helps slow evaporation, according to a USDA report.

The USDA in June forecast just a 1 percent drop in Vietnamese robusta production in 2024/25 to 27.85 million 60-kilogram bags. However, that’s about 9 percent lower than the 2021/22 season, illustrating the longer-term decline in output that’s coinciding with surging global demand.

Robusta is likely to keep gaining market share because it’s more tolerant to heat and disease than arabica—although both beans still face significant climate risks. That all adds up to bad news for the world’s coffee drinkers, who look set to face elevated prices for some time yet. Vietnam’s coffee belt was already experiencing wet weather in August, but the downpours that happened in the aftermath of Typhoon Yagi, which made landfall in the north of the country on September 7, drenched coffee plantations even further.

The continued rains mean Vietnamese shipments that usually start in early November will be delayed until early December or even later, said Daryl Kryst, assistant vice president, commodity execution and sales at StoneX, a commodities brokerage. “We do expect (robusta) prices to ease off, but that may not be seen until the start of next year.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/22/soggy-asia-coffee-crop-means-worlds-caffeine-fix-to-stay-pricey/>

Scientists confirm 2 Philippine buffaloes have distinct species

BusinessMirror
September 22, 2024



A PHILIPPINE native carabao (*Bubalus kerabau* Fitzinger, 1860) dam and her calf grazing in Pitogo Island, Bohol. 3

Scientists have found that the species of two domesticated buffaloes—swamp buffaloes and riverine buffaloes—are distinct from each other.

The recent study dispels the traditional classification of the domesticated buffaloes (*Bubalus bubalis*) into two subspecies.

The study was conducted by a team from the University of the Philippines-Diliman College of Science's Institute of Biology (UPD-CS IB) and from the Department of Agriculture-Philippine Carabao Center (DA-PCC), said a UPD-CS news release.



A RIVERINE buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis* Linnaeus, 1758).

Swamp buffaloes (*Bubalus bubalis carabanensis*) are primarily used to assist farmers with tilling the land, transporting tools, and, alternatively for meat, milk, hide, and manure, which is used as organic fertilizer.

Riverine buffaloes (*Bubalus bubalis bubalis*), on the other hand, are mainly used in milk production.

In the Philippines, crossbreeding and backcrossing these two breeds on a large scale helps create animals with improved potential for milk and meat production, despite their differences.

Hybridization of swamp and river buffaloes has limited success, however, sometimes producing offspring that does not achieve the desired traits.

The researchers conducted an investigation to clarify the taxonomic designation of swamp and riverine buffaloes in the Philippines.

They discovered that the DNA sequences of the genes from both swamp and riverine buffaloes are distinguishable and their chromosome numbers are different, affirming that they are two distinct species, not just subspecies of *Bubalus bubalis*.

The research team is comprised of Dr. Ian Kendrick C. Fontanilla, Nelvie Fatima Jane A. Soliven, John Gregor A. Roño, Francis L. Fontanilla, Emerson R. Servo, and Dr. Ernelea P. Cao of the UPD-CS IB.

Also in the team are Dr. Lilian P. Villamor, Therese Patrickka C. Cailipan, Alexander M. Paraguas, and Aivhie Jhoy E. Cuanang from DA-PCC.

“These results corroborate the observed differences in their appearances.” Villamor said.

Swamp buffaloes can be identified by the white or light gray markings on their lower jaw and brisket, known as a chevron, as well as their lighter skin and coat color compared to riverine buffaloes.

“They are also smaller, weighing between 325 kg and 450 kg, and have crescent-shaped horns. They are mainly used as draught animals,” said Villamor, citing data from her previous studies.

She said that river buffaloes, on the other hand, are larger, weighing between 450 kg and 1,000 kg, and have curly horns. They are primarily raised for milk and meat production.”

According to the team, the Philippine native carabao, which is currently classified as *Bubalus bubalis carabanensis*, should be now considered as *Bubalus kerabau* Fitzinger, 1860.

“The reclassification of the *Bubalus bubalis carabanensis* to *Bubalus kerabau* Fitzinger, 1860 supports earlier assumptions that riverine and swamp buffaloes are distinct,” added Fontanilla.

“Confusions on the classifications of the two buffaloes have implications on the breeding program of these species,” he said.

As their study was limited to examining the chromosomes of only swamp and riverine buffaloes, the researchers plan to include chromosomes from crossbred buffaloes in future studies to gain new insights into how these different types of buffaloes are genetically related and potentially improve the classification of the *Bubalus bubalis*.

The study, titled “Molecular Data and Karyotype Revealed Two Distinct Species of Domesticated Water Buffaloes in the Philippines,” offers valuable insights into the diversity of domesticated buffaloes, and can guide conservation and management efforts, particularly in developing potential hybrids with desired traits.

It was published in the Philippine Journal of Science, an open-access, single-blind peer-reviewed journal on natural sciences, engineering, mathematics, and social sciences.

Image credits: PHOTO CREDIT: LILIAN P. VILLAMOR, FROM RUANE ET AL., 202, THERESE PATRICKA C. CAILIPAN AND SONNY C. RAMOS

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/22/scientists-confirm-2-philippine-buffaloes-have-distinct-species/>