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MANILA BULLETIN:

DA probes into legal liability of rice importers for 'overstaying' containers in Manila port

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

Sep 23, 2024 02:50 PM



The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Monday, Sept. 23, said it is determining if rice importers may face legal liability for container vans of imported rice that have been "overstaying" at the Manila International Container Terminal (MICT) for several weeks.

Recently, the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) confirmed that 888 shipping containers, holding 20 million kilograms of rice, are currently stored in the container yards of Manila ports. Agriculture 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.

“Itsi-check muna namin. On the part ng DA, kasi kami ang concern namin sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances, so kung walang problema doon, isang way namin dito, tingnan on the policy side (We'll check it first. As for the DA, our concern is the sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances, so if there are no issues with that, one of the ways we address this is by reviewing it from a policy perspective),” Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa, the spokesperson of the DA, said when asked if importers will be held liable.

He said the agriculture department has already identified the consignee of the imported rice.

“So, part ito ng pag-review namin ngayon (So, this is part of our ongoing review) So, we will let you know,” the DA official told the media.

Meanwhile, PPA General Manager Jay Daniel Santiago three containers of the said 888 shipping containers have been claimed by the respective consignees.

“Dahil sa ating pagsisiwalat ng mga overstaying containers po diyan ng bigas, over the weekend lamang po ay nasa tatlondaang containers po ang na-pullout na ng mga kaniya-kaniyang consignees nito (Due to our disclosure of the overstaying rice containers, just over the weekend, around 300 containers were pulled out by their respective consignees),” he said.

“And we look forward na sa mga darating pa pong mga araw hanggang katapusan po ng buwang ito ay tuluyan pa pong mababawasan iyong mga overstaying containers natin diyan na naglalaman ng bigas (And we look forward to the coming days until the end of this month, hoping that the number of our overstaying containers containing rice will continue to decrease).”

Jayson Cainglet, the executive director of farmers' group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG), questioned why the Imported rice is being released and why no charges have been filed if hoarding was indeed involved.

Meanwhile, SINAG and former DA secretary, Leonardo Montemayor, doubts that the 20 million kilos of imported rice has any impact on market prices.

“Puro optimistic promises, but in the end; importers and foreign rice farmers lang ang nakinabang (All optimistic promises, but in the end, only importers and foreign rice farmers benefited),” said Cainglet.

Montemayor had earlier told 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.

The former DA chief noted that 96 percent of the imported rice arrivals are already out in the market.

SINAG had also reported that local farmers are now complaining about the ₱4 to ₱5 per kilo decrease in the farmgate price of “palay (unmilled rice).”

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/2024/9/23/da-probes-into-legal-liability-of-rice-importers-for-overstaying-containers-in-manila-port-1#google_vignette

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Modernizing agriculture



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

September 24, 2024 | 12:00am

The Manila Overseas Press Club Agriculture Forum with Department of Agriculture Secretary Francis Tiu Laurel on Sept. 17 at Fairmont Makati was a huge success, with an overflow audience of businessmen, diplomats and senior journalists.

Tiu Laurel, a self-made deep-sea fishing billionaire, painted a bright future for Philippine agriculture, despite calamities (18 cyclones in 2023 alone) that decimated food production. His DA team, the chief said, works tirelessly “foregoing some weekends and holidays, just to fulfill spoken and unspoken promises of improving our beloved industry.” His report, as edited:

In 2023, rice production reached 20.06 million metric tons, a 1.53 percent increase from the previous year’s 19.76 million MT. Yellow corn production grew 4.6 percent, from 6.09 million metric tons in 2022 to 6.37 million tons, notable considering the calamities.

DA’s National Rice Program (NRP) and National Corn Program (NCP) seek even higher production. Rice and corn farmers are being empowered with rice and corn seeds, organic and inorganic fertilizers, bio-pesticides and financial and technical assistance, among others. The DA is equally committed to increasing the production of high-value crops, livestock and poultry, and the fisheries subsector, along with the development of organic agriculture, urban and peri-urban agriculture and our Halal food industry. We only have three and a half years to do what we need to do.

Livestock and poultry production grew 3.0 percent and 4.0 percent in 2023. Fishing and aquaculture declined. The DA’s Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources is positioning its full resources to increase fish production. High-quality planting materials, small and large ruminants

and fingerlings, among others, are embedded in the menu of interventions for increased food production.

Partner countries are being tapped for official development assistance (ODA) financing “to address critical sectoral and institutional challenges and investment gaps.”

Major ODA projects include: One, build better more farm-to-market (FMR) roads and bridges with French funding. FMR roads link agriculture and fisheries production sites, coastal landing points and post-harvest facilities to the market.

Two, a World Bank-financed program for results (P4R) to support and help leverage the incremental funding to accelerate DA implementation and scale up impacts of activities. The WB’s P4R is one of the three WB financing instruments that rely on the government’s own systems and procedures and not on the bank’s procedure. P4R focuses on results that deliver sustainable results and build institutions, and to expand the impact of interventions through a program approach.

To modernize agriculture, DA and NIA are working on various irrigation system projects, especially small-scale irrigation, to quickly supply adequate irrigation water and boost harvest.

DA is lobbying with its partners to fund 8,000 solar-powered irrigation projects, in addition to DA’s own ongoing small-scale irrigation projects. We lack irrigation compared to our neighboring countries like Vietnam and Thailand, whose farms are 85-90 percent irrigated. Less than 50 percent of our farm lands are irrigated. Irrigation is really key. We will build more cold storages across the country to address overproduction storage concerns and minimize post-harvest losses for vegetables and high value crops. Again, we have 40 percent loss without cold storage.

DA wants to set up “food trains,” a transport system from hubs and terminals directly to consumer markets. This will streamline logistics and connect farms to consumers; eventually, cut the traders off and lower the price for consumers while increasing income for our farmers.

I want additional chiller warehouses for high value crops, especially in Taguig, we are in the works for creating a bigger chiller cold storage for completion by next year. In addition, we will be building food terminals along with cold storage facilities which will also be strategically established regionally. These facilities are very crucial to address the food logistical cold chain issues.

We have launched “Agri Puhunan at Pantawid” with our Planters Products Inc. and our friends from DBP, a credit facility that offers low-interest loans to help farmers meet their financial needs. The loans will be made accessible through DBP or the Land Bank of the Philippines, for farmers to sustain and expand their operations. The program includes crop insurance, a better insurance system, to make farming bankable.

African swine fever (ASF) continues to affect the livestock industry. As of Aug. 21, 2024, active cases have been recorded in 15 regions across the country. We take this threat seriously and are actively implementing preventive measures to curb its spread. On Aug. 30, we rolled out 10,000

doses of emergency ASF vaccines in Lobo, Batangas, and by October this year, roll out another 150,000 nationwide.

To concretize the President's vision to transform and modernize agriculture and fisheries, we formulated a comprehensive four-year plan, "Para sa Masaganang Bagong Pilipinas," to boost agricultural production, ensure consumer access to affordable food and ultimately achieve food security for the Filipino people. (End of speech)

During the open forum, Secretary Tiu Laurel said he needs P1 trillion to modernize agriculture. I told him Land Bank has over P1 trillion of idle deposits, more than enough to cover modernization cost or at least irrigate half of farm lands that are unirrigated.

Insanely liquid, with P3.3 trillion in assets, Land Bank has more than P2.95 trillion in deposits. Only about P1.146 trillion of that has been lent out, leaving a colossal P1.8 trillion idle or unused. That fortune if deployed to agriculture – Land Bank's original mission was finance small farmers and fishers – can help solve the current rice crisis and food shortage.

Solving the food crisis will lead to economic and political stability which in turn leads to a sweep by the administration coalition of nearly all the elective positions in the 2025 and 2028 elections. In one blow, you achieve both ultimate inclusion (food for the poor) and national unity.

How about it, Land Bank?

* * *

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<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/09/24/2387476/modernizing-agriculture>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Creation of coconut oil mills in Eastern Samar sought

[Miriam Desacada](#) - The Philippine Star

September 24, 2024 | 12:00am



House Minority Leader Marcelino Libanan filed House Bills 10834 and 10849, seeking the establishment of coconut oil manufacturing companies in the towns of Sulat and Quinapondan, respectively.

STAR / File

TACLOBAN, Philippines — Two measures seeking to establish two state-run coconut oil mills and refineries in Eastern Samar have been filed before the House of Representatives.

House Minority Leader Marcelino Libanan filed House Bills 10834 and 10849, seeking the establishment of coconut oil manufacturing companies in the towns of Sulat and Quinapondan, respectively.

Libanan's proposals aim to boost the productivity and income of farmers in his province. He said the mills would process raw coconuts into refined oil and other high-value products for domestic and foreign markets.

“We are counting on the facilities to enhance the value-added processing of coconut products, create employment, stimulate the economies of Eastern Samar and nearby provinces, and help alleviate poverty,” Libanan said.

He said the mills would generate income for the government and boost export of refined coconut oil, which is one of the country’s top commodity exports.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed the country exported \$1.12 billion worth of crude and refined coconut oil from January to July this year.

The amount showed a 58.5 percent increase, or \$411 million, from the \$704 million recorded in the same period last year.

Libanan’s proposals tasked the Department of Agriculture (DA), through the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), to oversee the establishment, operation and management of the oil mills and refineries.

Funding for the projects will be sourced from the current budgets of the DA and the PCA, he said.

Libanan proposes that the mills be exempted from taxes for five years as well as from customs and import duties for their equipment, raw materials and other operating inputs.

The establishments will be given priority access to credit facilities offered by government financial institutions, he said.

Libanan represents the 4Ps party-list in Congress. He represented the lone district of Eastern Samar from 1998 to 2007, after serving as vice governor from 1992 to 1995.

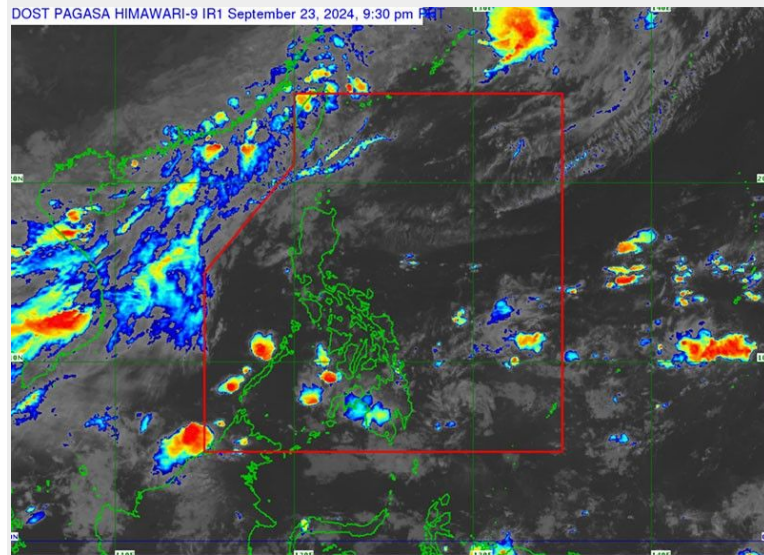
<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/09/24/2387493/creation-coconut-oil-mills-eastern-samar-sought>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Expect humid weather – PAGASA

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

September 24, 2024 | 12:00am



At a briefing, PAGASA weather specialist Aldczar Aurelio said the easterlies or warm wind from the Pacific Ocean is currently affecting the country.

PAGASA

MANILA, Philippines — Humid weather is expected to prevail as the southwest monsoon has weakened, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said yesterday.

At a briefing, PAGASA weather specialist Aldczar Aurelio said the easterlies or warm wind from the Pacific Ocean is currently affecting the country.

“The southwest monsoon has weakened further and it is easterlies that is currently affecting the eastern portion of the country,” Aurelio said.

He added that the weather bureau does not expect a low-pressure area or typhoon to occur.

“We will experience warmer weather compared (to) yesterday,” Aurelio said.

However, he said that isolated rains brought by thunderstorms can be experienced in the afternoon or evening.

Meanwhile, three dams in Luzon continue to release water as the level of the reservoirs continue increasing amid the rains experienced last week.

One gate of Ambuklao Dam in Benguet is still open at .5 meters after it reached 751.33 meters or .67 meters below its normal high water level of 752 meters.

Binga Dam in Benguet is also releasing water after it reached 574.40 meters or 0.6 meters below its normal high water level of 575 meters.

One gate of Magat Dam in Isabela is also open at one meter after it reached 185.95 meters or 4.04 meters below its normal high water level of 190 meters.

Meanwhile, the water level of Angat Dam increased by 0.25 meters after it reached 195.56 meters but is still 14.44 meters below its normal high water level of 210 meters.

Angat Dam supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water needs and provides for the irrigation needs of 25,000 hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga.

On the other hand, Ipo Dam in Bulacan reached 100.20 meters or 0.9 meters below its normal high water level of 101.1 meters; La Mesa Dam in Quezon City at 79.38 meters or 0.77 meters below its spilling level of 80.15 meters; San Roque Dam in Pangasinan, 272.07 meters or 7.93 meters below its normal high water level of 280 meters and Caliraya Dam in Laguna, 287.15 meters or 0.7 meters higher compared to its previous level of 286.45 meters.

\$39 million climate change project

Meanwhile, the government has started implementing a \$39.2-million (P2.185-billion) project that will capacitate at least 250,000 farmers nationwide to cope with the climate crisis and mitigate the ill effects on their food production systems.

The Department of Agriculture (DA), PAGASA and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization recently signed a tripartite agreement for the operationalization of a seven-year climate mitigation project.

The project, called Adapting Philippine Agriculture to Climate Change (APA), will be rolled out in at least 100 municipalities across nine provinces in five regions with the aim of boosting farmers' resilience, according to the DA.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. described the APA as an expansion and intensification of the DA's existing adaptation and mitigation initiative in agriculture program that seeks to assist more farmers vulnerable to climate change. — **Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/09/24/2387519/expect-humid-weather-pagasa>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Government asked to cut ASF vaccine approval period

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

September 24, 2024 | 12:00am



A piggery farm worker begins disinfecting an empty pig pen after more than 10 pigs were infected by African swine fever (ASF) on August 20, 2024.

STAR / Ryan Baldemor

MANILA, Philippines — A hog raisers' group yesterday asked the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Bureau of Animal Industry to shorten the period of approving permits for the commercial or emergency use of African swine fever (ASF) vaccine from six months to one month.

AGAP party-list Rep. Nicanor Briones, who is also president of the Pork Producers Federation of the Philippines (PPFP), said the six-month period is too long for hog raisers as thousands of pigs are being culled every day due to ASF.

“If we wait for the FDA to complete its processing protocol for the vaccine, many more pigs will die, our business will go bankrupt and prices of pork will tremendously increase,” Briones said.

He said a massive vaccine trial was undertaken in 2023 and the result was successful.

Commercial hog raiser Fritz Chua said a similar trial conducted in his farm in the same year proved that the vaccine is effective.

Briones noted that on Aug. 30, of the 41 pigs inoculated in Lobo, Batangas, 36 survived and some even developed antibodies.

“On Sept. 30, blood samples will be taken again from these pigs. If tests will show 70 to 80 percent antibodies in the animals, they are immune from ASF,” he said.

Briones expressed hope that by Oct. 1, the FDA could issue permits for the commercial or emergency use of ASF vaccine.

He said the PFP has written to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. to inform him that hog raisers themselves could attest to the efficacy of the vaccine.

Briones said vaccination is the only way to curb the spread of the virus and help the swine industry recover from its losses.

He said the government needs P3.6 billion to vaccinate 5.4 million hogs nationwide.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/09/24/2387498/government-asked-cut-asf-vaccine-approval-period>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Slow release of imported rice hit

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:00 AM September 24, 2024



Inquirer file photo/Edwin Bacasmas

MANILA, Philippines — Rice watch group Bantay Bigas and farmers organization Amihan National Federation of Peasant Women said on Monday the government should hold accountable those involved in rice hoarding and smuggling after the Department of Agriculture (DA) said that 888 containers vans containing around 23 million kilograms of imported rice had been sitting in Manila ports for months.

Cathy Estavillo, Amihan secretary general and Bantay Bigas spokesperson, said it was time to combat the alleged collusion, as some have been profiting from the illegal act at the expense of farmers and consumers.

“If the issue of hoarding or overstaying containers of imported rice in Manila ports was not exposed, it is possible that old or aging rice stocks could still be sold to Filipino consumers or through Kadiwa centers,” she said.

“The people should unite to fight this illegal activity because it is possible that these sacks of rice are no longer fit for human consumption,” she added.

The groups also reiterated their previous call for the repeal of the Rice Tariffication Law, Executive Order No. 62 and other laws and policies that liberalized the agriculture sector.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1986254/slow-release-of-imported-rice-hit>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

PPA chief says ‘currently’ no congestion at any ports

By: [Zacarian Sarao](#) - Reporter / [@zacariansINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 11:35 AM September 23, 2024



Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) General Manager Jay Daniel Santiago says that “currently” there is no congestion at its ports nationwide. Santiago gave this assurance Monday, September 23, 2024, following reports that 888 container vans of rice were discovered sitting in Manila ports for months. | [INQUIRER.net](#)

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) General Manager Jay Daniel Santiago said that “currently” there is no congestion at its ports nationwide.

Santiago gave this assurance Monday, following reports that 888 container vans of rice were discovered sitting in Manila ports for months.

It also came after Department of Agriculture (DA) chief Francisco Tiu Laurel attributed rice’s high prices to port congestion, which might have delayed the release of rice imports.

“Gusto lamang naming i-assure ang sambayanan na wala po tayong currently nai-experience na port congestion po sa ating mga pantalan,” Santiago said in a Palace press briefing.

(We just want to assure the public that we are not currently experiencing any port congestion at our ports.)

According to the PPA head, the Bureau of Customs has already cleared the 888 containers for release and may already be pulled out by the shipping consignees.

“And we look forward na sa mga darating pa pong mga araw hanggang katapusan po ng buwang ito ay tuluyan pa pong mababawasan iyong mga overstaying containers natin diyan na naglalaman ng bigas,” said Santiago.

(And we look forward to the fact that in the coming days until the end of this month, the overstaying containers that contain rice will be completely reduced.)

Santiago said the PPA leaves it to the DA or the Bureau of Plant Industry to speak with freight consignees concerning containers being left at ports for so long.

DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the 888 containers contained 23 million kilos or 23,000 metric tons (MT) of rice.

But he also noted that the containers only carried .75 percent of the total 3,093,000 MT of imported rice.

<https://business.inquirer.net/481801/ppa-chief-says-currently-no-congestion-at-any-ports>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Rice buildup in port could mean holdout for better prices — PPA

September 23, 2024 | 9:01 pm



BW FILE PHOTO

By **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**, *Reporter*

HUNDREDS of containers bearing rice remain unclaimed in port, with the port regulator saying that importers may be awaiting better market prices or trying to save on warehousing costs.

Speaking at a Palace briefing, Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) General Manager Jay Daniel Santiago acknowledged the possibility that importers were timing their withdrawals of rice from the Manila International Container Terminal with an eye towards market prices and storage costs.

Market conditions are at the moment not favorable to importers because of government efforts to lower rice prices, including the reduction in tariffs, he noted.

Mr. Santiago said the shipments that had been overstaying totaled 888 containers, of which 300 were claimed this weekend after the authorities warned that shipments were building up.

Mr. Santiago added that the ports are not congested. He was addressing claims that the slow unloading of imported rice shipments is delaying the expected fall of rice retail prices, foiling government plans to contain inflation.

Mr. Santiago noted that keeping containers in port is cheaper than holding shipments in private warehouses.

“Because of our exposition of overstaying containers of rice, 300 containers were pulled out by their consignees at the weekend,” Mr. Santiago said.

He said options for the disposal of the shipments deemed abandoned by the Bureau of Customs include auction or donation to government agencies like the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Some of the shipments will be declared abandoned starting Oct. 1, he said.

Agriculture Undersecretary Arnel V. de Mesa said the 888 containers held about 23,000 metric tons (MT) of imported rice, equivalent to 0.75% of all imports so far this year.

Imports in the year to date amounted to 3,093,000 MT.

“This is just a small amount, but if we look at the absolute value, this is still 23,000 metric tons,” Mr. De Mesa said.

The Bureau of Customs at the weekend said only 630 containers of rice remained at the port, noting that none of the shipments still unclaimed were staying in excess of 30 days.

Mr. Santiago cited instances of containers remaining in port for as long as 275 days.

The government will monitor other commodities like pork, chicken, and onions to ensure they are not overstaying, Mr. De Mesa said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr., has said that the delayed release of rice imports from ports was a factor in the delayed fall in rice prices.

The government aims to reduce rice prices by P5 to P7, in part by bringing in cheaper imports.

Inflation eased to 3.3% last month from 4.4% in July, as food price growth moderated while transport costs declined.

The share of rice in inflation fell to 14.7% from 20.9% in July and 22.5% in June. It remained the largest component of inflation in August.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/23/623384/rice-buildup-in-port-could-mean-holdout-for-better-prices-ppa/>

PH rice supply, prices remain stable amid harvest season

By Charles Dantes

September 23, 2024, 11:55 pm

The Department of Agriculture (DA) assured the public on Monday that the country's rice supply and prices will remain stable, citing the upcoming palay harvest and the arrival of imported rice.

In a Palace briefing, DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said rice prices have already begun to drop, as promised by President Ferdinand Marcos during the 2022 national elections. De Mesa said the DA expects to harvest 20 million metric tons of palay this year. Despite losses from recent typhoons, which caused a loss of around 420,000 metric tons, he said these are within the expected range of 400,000 to 600,000 metric tons annually. He added that prices, which reached P50, are starting to decline, in line with Marcos administration's commitment.

"Our imports are now at three million metric tons. So, when it comes to supply, our expectations and projections are looking good. As for the prices, we've seen that imported rice is now at P42, while local rice is at P45," De Mesa said.

De Mesa noted that by October, DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel expects more significant reductions in rice prices, with changes continuing through January.

The DA is also coordinating with the Philippine Ports Authority to release 888 containers of rice—approximately 23,000 metric tons—that have been held at ports.

This represents just 0.75% of the total 3.1 million metric tons of imported rice that have entered the country this year, according to Bureau of Plant Industry data.

As the holiday season approaches, De Mesa noted that rice imports tend to increase during the fourth quarter of the year.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314501434/ph-rice-supply-prices-remain-stable-amid-harvest-season.html>

MANILA STANDARD

Aparri folk still haunted by black sand extraction



DWINDLING CATCH OF SHRIMP. Fishermen in Aparri, Cagayan are worried over their decreasing catch of shrimp and other marine products they attribute to unceasing black sand extraction.

By Rosenda Alluad-Visaya

September 23, 2024, 10:30 pm

APARRI, Cagayan — Two years after the protests of about 2,000 fisherfolk in Aparri against black sand mining operations the repercussions are still “keenly felt” in this town.

Despite urgent calls for environmental preservation and the protection of livelihoods, the scars of mining persist, casting a shadow over the region’s ecological balance and economic stability, the Aparri environment protection group noted in a statement on Saturday here.

Reports on social media here with almost 200,000 views continue to highlight the “enduring impact of the mining activities on their daily lives.” Fishermen lament the dwindling catch, echoing the sentiments expressed during the protest in 2022.

“The once-abundant marine resources have yet to recover, leaving many families grappling with diminished incomes and uncertain futures. Moreover, concerns raised about the erosion threat posed by the dredging project have not abated. Residents fear the long-term consequences of ecological disruption, especially in an area prone to flooding and vulnerable to the ravages of climate change,” concerned citizens said.

“While the authorities claim the dredging project was necessary for river restoration and flood control, the voices of the affected communities cannot be stifled. The disparity between official assurances and the actual experiences of the people underscores the urgent need for transparency, accountability, and genuine consultation in decision-making processes,” they said.

“As we reflect on the events of two years ago, it is clear that the struggle for environmental justice in Cagayan is far from over. The legacy of the protest lives on as a testament to the resilience and determination of communities to safeguard the natural heritage and secure a sustainable future for generations to come,” fisherman Eddie Saquing said.

Fishermen lamented the dwindling catch, echoing the sentiments expressed during the protest of 2022.

“The once-abundant marine resources have yet to recover, leaving many families grappling with diminished incomes and uncertain future. Moreover, concerns raised about the erosion threat posed by the dredging project have not abated. Residents fear the long-term consequences of ecological disruption, especially in the flood-prone areas that are vulnerable to the ravages of climate change,” the advocates noted.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/lgu/314501409/aparri-folk-still-haunted-by-black-sand-extraction.html>

THE MANILA TIMES

DA launches high-tech service for agri co-ops

By **Janine Alexis Miguel**
September 24, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) wants farmers' cooperatives to improve their livelihood by going high-tech.

This was announced as Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. on Monday signed Memorandum Circular 22 that launched the Agricultural Cooperative Enterprise Development (ACED) Services, which will operate in the central and regional field offices of the DA to assist agricultural groups nationwide.

ACED is envisioned to lead the digital transformation of agricultural co-ops by using data analytics, online marketplaces, and climate adaptation tools — all aimed to enhance productivity and sustainability.



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. Photo from Department of Agriculture

The program will also help create policies and plans for the groups, coordinate their efforts, and oversee the implementation of projects to address development gaps and adjust strategies as needed.

The Office of the Undersecretary for Operations, now led by Undersecretary Roger Navarro, will oversee the operations of ACED.

"President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has highlighted the crucial role that transforming and consolidating farmers' cooperatives and associations plays in improving the livelihoods of our agricultural community. These efforts are key to advancing agricultural development and ensuring food security," Tiu Laurel said.

"By fostering increased income, adopting modern farming technologies, and enhancing food security and agricultural exports, we are taking significant steps toward a more productive and sustainable agricultural sector."

ACED will also offer comprehensive training programs for cooperatives and associations, and partnerships with other government agencies, private institutions and civil society groups.

The DA said these will prioritize skills enhancement and knowledge development.

Tiu Laurel pointed out ACED is designed to streamline efforts and maximize resources allocated for cooperative support. The services will implement feedback mechanisms to continually improve and adjust strategies based on stakeholder input.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/24/business/top-business/da-launches-high-tech-service-for-agri-co-ops/1973563>

DA sees no rice shortage despite storm farm damage

Samuel P. Medenilla
September 24, 2024

DESPITE the mounting agricultural damage from recent typhoons, the Department of Agriculture (DA) is confident there will be no rice supply shortage, as production for the local food staple is projected to still reach 20 million metric tons (MMT) this year.

In a briefing in Malacañang on Monday, DA Assistant Secretary Arnel V. de Mesa disclosed the damage to rice production from the initial typhoons this year is only 420,000 metric tons, which is still within their target.

“We expect 400 to 600 thousand metric tons of losses every year. So, these losses are within the limit we expect and we expect we will be able to harvest 20 million metric tons for this year.”

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed rice production during the first quarter of the year reached 5.24 MMT and 4.69 MMT from April June.

As of August, PSA said the country’s total rice stocks inventory was at 1.87 MMT.

Rice imports

The existing rice supply is expected to be augmented with the arrival of more imports after President Ferdinand Marcos issued Executive Order No. 62, which took effect in July, lowering the tariff for the food staple to 15 percent. Last week, DA announced the price of imported rice is expected to drop once the concerned consignees are able to pull out 23,000 metric tons of imported rice contained in “overstaying” 888 ship containers at the Manila International Container Terminal (MICT) by two to 275 days.

De Mesa said the shipments represent just 0.75 percent of the over 3 million MMT of imported rice, which was registered by the Bureau of Plant Industry this year.

The number of imported rice is expected to rise before the end of the year, bringing down the price of imported rice.

“Historically speaking, most of the imported rice will arrive every fourth quarter,” De Mesa said.

In its price monitoring report, the DA said the average weekly price for imported well-milled rice was at P49.33 per kilo, while imported regular milled rice was P43.84 per kilo from September 16 to 21, 2024.

This was lower compared to price of imported rice during the third weeks of August (well-milled, P53.04; regular milled, P47.08), July (well-milled, P52.60; regular milled, P49.09); and June (well-milled, P53.43; regular milled, P49.78).

Possible hoarding

In a related development, Philippine Ports Authority General Manager Jay R. Santiago said they are looking at the possibility that some consignees with overstaying rice shipments can be held liable for hoarding.

They are determining if consignees are taking advantage of the storage fee in the MICT, which is cheaper compared to private warehouses, to store their rice imports as they wait for its price to rise.

“That is why they are waiting for the chance for the price [of imported rice] to rise with its demand, before they release their rice,” Santiago said.

He said they will leave it to the concerned government agencies such as the DA and the Bureau of Customs to go after the erring consignees for violating the Customs’ Modernization Tariff Act for failing to remove their shipments in the ports within the required 30-day period. Of the 888 containers, 300 was already pulled out from the ports over the weekend.

“We look forward in the upcoming days and until the end of the month for the said overstaying containers with rice to be further reduced,” Santiago said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/24/da-sees-no-rice-shortage-despite-storm-farm-damage/>

DA pact on climate to benefit 1.25 million farmers

Ada Pelonia
September 24, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) entered into a tripartite agreement for the \$39.2 million climate change project set to benefit 1.25 million farmers in the climate-vulnerable regions of the country.

The department signed the Operational Partners Agreement together with the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., Pagasa Administrator Nathaniel T. Servando, and FAO Representative in the Philippines Lionel Dabbadie were present in the signing.

The seven-year initiative aims to boost the resilience of rural communities reliant on agriculture. The project spans five regions, nine provinces, and 100 towns.

Building on over a decade of work under the Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (Amia) Program, Laurel described the APA Project as an expansion and intensification of these efforts to assist better those who are most in need.

The Amia Program is DA's flagship climate change program that developed a community-based resiliency model.

“Our combined efforts in implementing the APA Project will strengthen the foundation of progressive and resilient communities that we have begun through our various climate-resiliency-building initiatives under AMIA and other DA programs,” he said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Dabbadie stressed the broader impact of the APA Project, highlighting its long-term benefits for both farmers and the nation.

“It’s about directly benefiting 250,000 farmers, translating to a total benefit of 1.25-M individuals [with five members per household], and indirectly helping millions more not only to adapt but also to lead with innovation and resilience,” he explained.

“It’s about creating opportunities for growth in the fields and through agricultural enterprises, ensuring that future generations continue to benefit from the rich agricultural heritage of the Philippines—a nation sustained by farming for centuries.”

The total project cost amounts to \$39.2 million, financed by a Green Climate Fund (GCF) grant of \$26.3 million and co-financed by the Philippine government with \$12.9 million. The Department of Finance (DOF) serves as the Philippines’ National Designated Authority to the GCF.

As one of the most climate-risk countries in the world, the Philippines continues to face frequent and catastrophic extreme weather events, such as tropical cyclones, droughts, floods, and irregular precipitation that threaten both the livelihoods of Filipino farmers and the food security of millions of people.

The DA said a key outcome of the project is the adoption of climate-resilient farming practices by farmers, empowering them to establish sustainable enterprises.

“The project also aims to strengthen regulatory frameworks, enhance market systems, and improve knowledge management to mainstream and scale up climate-resilient agriculture nationwide.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/24/da-pact-on-climate-to-benefit-1-25-million-farmers/>

DA sets support system for coops

BusinessMirror
September 24, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is setting up a support system for cooperatives and groups to increase the productivity and income of farmers.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. ordered that the newly established Agricultural Cooperative Enterprise Development (Aced) services would operate within both the central and regional field offices of the DA through Memorandum Circular 22.

These services would be overseen by the Office of the Undersecretary for Operations led by Undersecretary Roger Navarro.

Laurel said this new initiative should enhance the capabilities of agricultural groups across the country which would strengthen food security and improve farm productivity through a comprehensive support system.

He emphasized that the Aced services were central to the government's strategy to empower farmers and fishermen.

“President Marcos has highlighted the crucial role that transforming and consolidating farmers' cooperatives and associations plays in improving the livelihoods of our agricultural community. These efforts are key to advancing agricultural development and ensuring food security,” he said in a statement.

The department said the Aced services would help formulate policies and plans that support agricultural cooperatives while coordinating efforts and overseeing the implementation of projects designed to address developmental gaps and adjust strategies as needed.

This would also provide comprehensive training programs for cooperatives and associations, including collaborations with other government agencies, private institutions, and civil society organizations.

“The new offices will also spearhead the digital transformation of agricultural cooperatives, promoting the use of data analytics, online marketplaces, and climate adaptation tools. This initiative is aimed at boosting productivity, sustainability, and resilience within the sector.”

Laurel said the Aced Services were designed to streamline efforts and maximize the effectiveness of resources allocated for cooperative support.

He also noted that the services would implement feedback mechanisms to continually improve and adjust strategies based on stakeholder input.

“The establishment of Aed Services underscores our commitment to enhancing the livelihoods of farmers and fishermen,” Laurel said.

“By fostering increased income, adopting modern farming technologies, and enhancing food security and agricultural exports, we are taking significant steps toward a more productive and sustainable agricultural sector.”

The DA also said the strategic focus on agricultural cooperatives reflects the broader goal of transforming the agricultural landscape in the Philippines.

“As Aced Services begin their work, they are poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of agriculture, driving growth, and ensuring the well-being of the agricultural community across the nation.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/24/da-sets-support-system-for-coops/>

Bill supporting young fishers and farmers hurdles House

Jovee Marie N. dela Cruz
September 23, 2024

The House of Representatives has passed on third and final reading a bill establishing the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Program.

With 185 affirmative votes, no negative votes, and no abstentions, lawmakers recently approved House Bill 10840, which aims to promote and tap into the potential of young farming entrepreneurs to foster growth and development, particularly in rural areas. The bill will now be transmitted to the Senate for its own deliberations.

According to the bill, the program will support and empower young farmers and fishermen, encouraging them to become active partners in food security, agricultural development, and modernization.

The bill encourages young people to pursue careers or engage in agriculture-related activities, participate in policy formulation, and help implement programs in the agricultural sector. It provides support for youth-led agribusiness and agri-entrepreneurship initiatives, positioning the youth as agents of development.

The bill defines young farmers and fishermen as those between 15 and 35 years old who are engaged in farming and fisheries and registered under the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture.

The measure said young farmers and fisherfolk seeking employment for the first time will be exempt from government fees and charges related to licenses, IDs, clearances, and other employment documents, whether for local or overseas employment. For his part, House Committee on Agriculture Rep. Wilfrido Mark M. Enverga said the bill aims to empower and encourage the youth to pursue careers in agriculture, ensuring that they become active partners in the country's agricultural development and modernization.

He said this proposal follows President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s emphasis on the vital role of a robust agricultural sector, noting that a strong economy is built on a stable food supply. The urgency of this need has been further underscored by global crises such as the Russia-Ukraine

conflict and the lingering effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which have exposed vulnerabilities in food security.

In the Philippines, Enverga said agriculture is the primary source of income for most rural families. However, rapid urbanization has led to a significant portion of the rural population, particularly the youth, abandoning agricultural activities in favor of more lucrative professions in urban areas. This trend poses a serious threat to the future of Philippine agriculture.

“Currently, the average age of Filipino farmers is 58 years old. With the youth sector comprising 44 million individuals aged 15 to 40, there is an urgent need to engage this demographic in agriculture. The challenge is not just about sustaining the agricultural sector but also about ensuring national food security by 2030.”

Also, Enverga said youth unemployment in the Philippines remains a significant issue, with the overall youth unemployment rate at 7.2 percent, and a staggering 14.1 percent among those aged 15 to 24. “This lack of opportunities for the youth is not just an obstacle to development; it also threatens social justice and national security.”

The Young Farmers Challenge Program aims to motivate young Filipinos to pursue careers in agriculture, give them a voice in policy debates, and provide institutional support for agribusiness and entrepreneurial initiatives. By addressing challenges like limited access to education, land, credit, and green jobs, the bill hopes to create meaningful opportunities for the youth in rural areas.

“This legislative measure seeks to address the myriad challenges faced by young people in rural areas, such as limited access to knowledge, education, land, affordable credit, and green jobs.” By institutionalizing the Young Farmers Challenge Program, Enverga said the bill aims to create opportunities for the youth to contribute meaningfully to the agricultural sector, ensuring the sustainability and growth of the industry for future generations.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/23/bill-supporting-young-fishers-and-farmers-hurdles-house/>

Presyo ng bigas nagsimula nang bumaba

Gemma Garcia

September 24, 2024 | 12:00am



Inaasahan naman ng DA na makakapag-ani ng 20 milyon metriko tonelada ngayong taon.

Philstar.com / Irra Lising

MANILA, Philippines — Asahan na ang matatag na supply at pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas sa bansa ngayong Oktubre.

Ito ang sinabi ni Department of Agriculture (DA) Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa sa press briefing sa Malakanyang.

Ayon kay De Mesa, tulad ng naipangako ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr., nagsimula nang bumaba ang presyo ng bigas dahil sa inaasahang anihan ng palay at ang pagdating ng imported na butil ngayong taon.

Inaasahan naman ng DA na makakapag-ani ng 20 milyon metriko tonelada ngayong taon.

Nilinaw pa ng opisyal na ang inaasahang 400 hanggang 600 metriko toneladang pagkalugi kada taon ay nasa loob pa rin ng limitasyon tulad na lamang ng epekto ng mga nakaraang bagyo kung saan tinatayang 420,000 metriko tonelada ang nawala.

“And iyong ating import natin nasa three million metric tons na. So, in terms sa supply, maganda iyong expectation natin iyong ating projection. Sa presyo naman, nakita na natin mayroon na tayong PhP42 sa imported rice, ang local natin is PhP45,” ayon pa kay De Mesa.

Dahil dito kaya inaasahan na mula Oktubre hanggang Enero ay magkakaroon ng malaking pagbabago sa presyo ng bigas.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/09/24/2387521/presyo-ng-bigas-nagsimula-nang-bumaba>

Kawawang mga mangingisda

BANAT NI BATUIGAS - Bening Batuigas

September 24, 2024 | 12:00am

LUMILIIT na ang pinangingisdaan ng ating mga mangingisda dahil sa panghaharang ng mga Chinese Coast Guard sa Bajo de Masinloc. Pero hindi naman nagpapabaya ang Philippine Coast Guard, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources at Philippine Navy sa pagbibigay ng ayuda at proteksyon sa mga mangingisda. Maging ang PCG ay binu-bully rin ng mga CCG. Dahilan para ang mga barko natin ay masira sa pagbomba ng tubig at pagbanga sa mga ito. Hindi alintana ng mga taga-PCG at BFAR ang piligro sa kanilang mission at patuloy pa rin sila.

Hanggang saan aabot ang pambu-bully ng China? Mahirap sagutin. Mabuti pa kung gumawa na lamang ng mga bagong strategy ang pamahalaan.

Ang Bajo de Masinloc ay nasa exclusive economic zone ng Pinas, subalit patuloy na inaangkin ng mga Intsik at gumamit na sila ng dahas upang mapalayas ang mga Pinoy sa WPS.

Kung naipukos ng mga mambabatas ang iskandalo sa mga teritoryong nasa loob ng EEZ, malamang walang kaguluhan. Tiyak, mabibigyan ng tamang sulusyon sa pamamagitan ng mga legal na proseso at paghingi ng tulong sa ibang bansa particular sa United States.

Sapantaha ko, may koneksiyon sa operasyon ng POGO sa bansa ang nangyayaring tensiyon sa WPS. Dapat ipukos ng mga mambabatas ang kanilang imbestigasyon sa mga dayuhang naglungga sa bansa na ang gawain ay maghasik ng krimen.

Ang mahirap lang, may mga Pinoy na may mga katungkulan pa sa pamahalaan ang nagbibigay ng proteksyon sa mga dayuhan kapalit ang paldo-paldong pera. Dapat silang walisin pagdating ng halalan 2025 at 2028.

Nalaman ko, karamihan sa mga nagbigay ng proteksiyon sa mga dayuhan ay mula sa Davao. Hindi na kataka-taka ito at tiyak magpapatuloy pa. Abangan!

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/opinyon/2024/09/24/2387484/kawawang-mga-mangingisda>