

CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

A. MANILA BULLETIN:

Lower rice price due to tariff cuts to be felt by next year—DA chief

DA eyes completion of ASF vaccine procurement of 600k doses by December

Peso expected to rise further as holiday remittances surge—Recto

Calabarzon hog-raisers seek approval of permits to buy ASF vaccines

Escudero: Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act to give more teeth vs smugglers

B. THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

ASF vaccine procurement completed in December

Smugglers and saboteurs

Marcos optimistic rice prices will ease further

‘Marcos should be liable for rice hoarding, smuggling’ – groups

DOST-PAGASA: Don’t ignore ‘weak’ La Niña

C. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Marcos: Expect rice prices to fall further

Marcos to sign anti-agri economic sabotage bill this week

Bicol farmers, fisherfolk suffer ‘severe losses’ due to storms

DA creates new unit to support co-ops

DA targets to finish ASF vaccine procurement by end of 2024

D. BUSINESS WORLD:

PHL hoping S.Korea FTA can take effect this year

Food import monitoring tie-up eyed by DA, PPA, Customs

US biotech firm expands footprint in Philippines

Palay production may decline due to La Niña

E. MANILA STANDARD:

Rice prices to decline by as much as P7/kilo in January—Agri chief

Outstanding urban gardens get DA prizes

F. THE MANILA TIMES:

Marcos sees lower rice prices

Marcos to sign new anti-smuggling law

FDA, BAI urged to speed up approval of ASF vaccine

Import permit changes eyed to boost deliveries

Drop in palay prices alarms farmers' group

G. BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA tweaking agri import rules to curb ‘overstayers’

DA pushes irrigation expansion, urban farming for food security

‘Stable oil, food prices spell continued inflation easing’

₱8.3B from tariffs seen to aid farm production

HB 10840: A bold plan to transform PHL agriculture

H. ABANTE TONITE:

BBM pinapaapura bakuna kontra ASF

I. REMATE:

PBBM, kumpiyansa sa pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas

600K ASF vax bibilhin ng DA ‘gang Disyembre

Kaso vs rice importers na may overstaying containers sa Manila port, pag-aaralan ng DA

J. ABANTE:

Murang bigas sa Enero pa matitikman

MANILA BULLETIN:

Lower rice price due to tariff cuts to be felt by next year—DA chief

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

Sep 24, 2024 06:32 PM



MB FILE PHOTO

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. on Tuesday, Sept. 24, said the full effects of the tariff reduction will be felt by the public by January 2025.

On June 20, President Marcos enacted Executive Order (EO) 62, which lowered rice tariffs from 35 percent to 15 percent, leading to the influx of imported rice into the country.

“The DA estimates by mid-October dapat pababa na iyan slowly, but the full effects should be felt by January of 2025 (The DA estimates that by mid-October, it should start decreasing slowly, but the full effects should be felt by January 2025),” Laurel said, referring to the price of rice.

“Marami pa tayong stocks ng, iyong stocks na imported na nabili ng mahal paubos na (We still have a lot of stocks, but the expensive imported stocks that were purchased are nearly depleted),” he went on.

Also, the DA chief said that there are still many stocks of local “palay (unmilled rice)” purchased at very high price.

“But the problem is maraming nabiling local palay at a very high price of ₱30.00 per kilo from January to June of this year. Marami pang stock noon (But the problem is, a lot of local palay was bought at a very high price of ₱30.00 per kilo from January to June of this year. There is still plenty of that stock),” he stated.

Laurel said the local unmilled rice will run out by November, so the public will see cheaper rice.

In addition, he said the price of rice in the international market has also gone down.

“But the full effects, para sa akin, ₱5 to ₱7 ang range, so, I will put it at ₱5 na dapat bumaba, kung ₱52 ngayon ang bigas, dapat by January nasa ₱48 na lag iyan, kung ₱50 ang bigas ngayon, ₱45 dapat iyan by January. Iyan ang aking estimates (But the full effects, for me, will be in the range of ₱5 to ₱7, so I would put it at a ₱5 decrease. If rice is ₱52 now, it should be at ₱48 by January. If it's ₱50 now, it should be ₱45 by January. Those are my estimates),” said Laurel.

For his part, Department of Finance (DOF) Secretary Ralph Recto said: “Initially, I don’t have the numbers right now exactly, but more or less mga ₱ 6 iyon eh on the imported rice.”

“But it all depends on what world prices will look like, kasi we make naman, world prices din eh. But, I think, by November, December, it should be, by that time dapat pababa na iyan (it should go down),” he added.

Farmers' group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG), meanwhile, lauded Laurel for stating the “true picture on the ground.”

“DA’s own bantay presyo (price monitoring), PSA survey and the daily reports from the field suggest that rice prices hardly moved, almost three months into the effectivity of EO,” Jayson Cainglet, the executive director of SINAG, said.

“We await the January figures but figures don’t lie; 800,000 MT of imported rice have arrived since the effectivity of EO 62, but rice prices remain high.”

SINAG said what they are worried about is the big drop in farmgate price of rice during these lean months.

“Currently nasa ₱14-₱16/kilo (freshly harvest) and ₱17-₱19/kilo (dry), down from the pre-EO 62 level of ₱22-₱25/ kilo (fresh) ₱25-₱29/kilo (dry) (Currently at ₱14-₱16/kilo (freshly harvest) and ₱17-₱19/kilo (dry), down from the pre-EO 62 level of ₱22-₱25/kilo (fresh) ₱25-₱29/ kilo (dry)),” said Cainglet.

“Ano ang gagawin ng NEDA and those other personalities who pushed EO 62, come this peak harvest, if farmgate price of palay fall within or below production cost (What will NEDA and those other personalities who pushed EO 62, come this peak harvest, do if the farmgate price of palay falls within or below production cost)?”

Earlier, former DA secretary, Leonardo Montemayor, told National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arnesio Balisacan should explain to the public why the NEDA-backed 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).”

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

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/24/lower-rice-price-due-to-tariff-cuts>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA eyes completion of ASF vaccine procurement of 600k doses by December

BY [RAYMUND ANTONIO](#)

Sep 24, 2024 02:09 PM

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is looking at procuring some 600,000 doses of African swine fever (ASF) vaccine by December this year, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said on Tuesday, Sept. 24.



(Photo from the Department of Agriculture)

“As far as ASF is concerned, the first 10,000 doses will be finished... the vaccination will be finished by end of the month and the schedule for the award for the next 450,000 doses is October 10--of which, we will take delivery of 150,000 doses by then,” he stated during the Palace media briefing.

“But we hope to complete the procurement of 600,000 doses by end of December this year,” the secretary added.

In August, the Philippines started the controlled trial of the ASF vaccine as part of its efforts to stop the spread of the ASF, which has been affecting the domestic hog industry since it was detected in 2019.

The government plans to inoculate even healthy pigs to curb the spread of the disease.

The DA earlier said it allocated P350 million for the procurement of the 600,000 doses of ASF vaccine for the trial, which will be done voluntarily and will prioritize small hog producers in areas

with high cases of the disease.

Laurel underscored the importance of rolling out the ASF vaccines, especially to backyard farmers and livestock growers.

“Pag may confidence na ‘yung mga magbababoy sa vaccine na ito (If our hog producers have confidence on this vaccine), then they will start investing again in farms, pati iyong mga commercials natin at magre-repopulate (even our commercial producers will repopulate),” he said.

“Hopefully, everything will be implemented on schedule,” the official added.

The DA chief also expressed hope that Filipino hog farmers and producers will focus on repopulating next year to bring back the country’s pig population, which is currently at 7.5 million heads, to 14 million heads.

Asked if the DA expects pork prices to rise during the coming holiday season, Laurel downplayed any significant increase because hog producers are currently expediting the movement of pork meat in the market.

“But of course, demand in December is usually double, mataas. So, baka tumaas ng konti, pero hindi naman siguro significant (high. It may increase but maybe not that significant),” he said.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/24/da-eyes-completion-of-asf-vaccine-procurement-of-600k-doses>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Peso expected to rise further as holiday remittances surge—Recto

BY [MANILA BULLETIN](#)

Sep 24, 2024 02:38 PM

President Marcos' chief economic manager expects further appreciation of the peso against the US dollar, driven by increased remittance inflows during the upcoming holiday season.

In a briefing on Tuesday, Sept. 24, Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto explained that the local currency typically strengthens against the dollar toward the end of the year as overseas Filipinos send more money home for the holidays.

He noted that this "seasonal" appreciation of the peso, while unfavorable for exporters and overseas workers, would positively impact the cost of imported goods.

“It's a seasonal trend; the peso strengthens during Christmas. I think we'll see it drop to the lower 55s, which means we will save on our imports,” Recto told reporters.

The peso opened weaker on Tuesday, trading at P56.05 to P56.255 compared to Monday's closing rate of P55.97.

The peso has already begun to appreciate against the dollar as the US Federal Reserve initiated its monetary policy easing cycle with a 50 basis point rate cut last week.

Domestically, the Monetary Board (MB) has also embarked on its own monetary easing cycle, which is expected to continue.

As a member of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) MB, Recto indicated that the central bank's highest policy-making body may consider further reducing its key policy rates during its upcoming meeting in October.

In August, the BSP cut key interest rates by 25 basis points, marking its first such action since November 2020.

Recto suggested that the BSP might match the US Fed's 50 basis point cut next month.

The MB has two remaining rate-setting meetings this year, scheduled for Oct. 17 and Dec. 19.

In addition to interest rate cuts, which typically take time to influence the economy, the BSP has reduced banks' reserve requirement ratio by 250 basis points, releasing approximately P380 billion into the Philippine economy.

Recto assured that this substantial increase in liquidity would not trigger inflation.

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“We considered this when we decided on the policy at the BSP meeting,” he said when asked about the potential inflationary impact of the reserve requirement cut.

“This will be beneficial for the economy, enhancing the capital markets. We're injecting roughly P380 billion into the system, which will be advantageous for banks,” the finance chief added.

He noted that the effects of the reserve requirement cut are more immediate compared to those of the policy rate reduction.

The Marcos administration aims for inflation to fall within its target range of 2.0 percent to 4.0 percent this year. At end-August, inflation averaged 3.6 percent.

Recto projected that inflation would slow in September to around 2.5 percent, down from 3.3 percent the previous month.

“For September, we expect it to be roughly 2.5 percent, within a range of 2.5 percent to 2.9 percent, with the midpoint being approximately 2.5 percent,” Recto stated.

He also noted that inflation tends to be seasonal, predicting a slight increase in the fourth quarter but still within the range of 3.1 percent to 3.9 percent. Based on current models, he projected inflation for next year to be between 2.9 and 3.1 percent.

Government measures to combat food inflation

Meanwhile, Recto emphasized that government actions, such as tariff reductions on rice, are beginning to lower inflation, with further decreases expected in the coming months, ideally aligning with the holiday season.

“Tamang-tama pagdating ng Pasko, medyo mas mababa na siguro ang presyo ng bigas. *[It's ideal that when Christmas comes, the price of rice will probably be a little lower].*”

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel said that rice prices are expected to decrease by P5 to P7 by January 2025, with initial reductions starting in mid-October due to lower duties and decreasing global prices.

While the government recognizes the need to review the 15-percent rice tariff, any adjustments will depend on the supply situation, emphasizing that increased production and adequate resources for agriculture are necessary before considering tariff reductions, Recto said.

“Kulang ba ang suplay natin? Kung kulang ang suplay kailangan mong mag-import. There is no way around that, ‘di ba? So, it will take time for us to increase our production [...] Having said that, there should be adequate resources for the agriculture department. To increase the production will probably take at least two years,” he added.

Meanwhile, Tiu-Laurel forecasted that while pork prices may rise slightly during the holiday season due to increased demand, the ongoing Asian Swine Flu (ASF) situation and farmers' desire to sell their stock before vaccination will help prevent significant price hikes.

The President is closely monitoring food inflation weekly and is working on strategies to stabilize and reduce prices through investments in post-harvest facilities and processing systems, Tiu-Laurel said.

He emphasized the importance of expediting the ASF vaccine rollout to boost farmer confidence and encourage investment in hog farming, aiming to increase the pig population from 7.5 million to 14 million heads by next year.

“Kapag may confidence na ang mga magbababoy sa vaccine na ito, then they will start investing again in farms, pati iyong mga commercials natin at magre-repopulate,” he said. According to the agriculture chief, the vaccination against ASF will complete the initial 10,000 doses by month-end, with the next 450,000 doses set for award on Oct. 10, aiming to procure a total of 600,000 doses by year-end. **(Derco Rosal)**

https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/24/peso-expected-to-rise-further#google_vignette

MANILA BULLETIN:

Calabarzon hog-raisers seek approval of permits to buy ASF vaccines

BY [AARON RECUENCO](#)

Sep 24, 2024 08:12 AM

A group of hog-raisers in Calabarzon is seeking the approval of the commercial use of an African Swine Fever (ASF) vaccine in a bid to expedite the inoculation and eventually assist the industry amid the expected high demand for pork for the Holiday season.

The Pork Producers Federation of the Philippines (PPFP) said the approval of the permits for the A-VAC ASF Live will save the lives of 3.6 million piglets and fattener in Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon).

“Our members have the funds to procure the A-VAC vaccines but the protocol set by the Food and Drug Administration hinders the procurement,” said PPFP chairperson and AGAP Partylist Representative Nick Briones.

Briones said his group had already sent a letter to Department of Agriculture Secretary Francis Tiu Laurel, Jr., regarding the request.

He stressed the necessity of immediate inoculation as the ASF has been causing serious concerns not only to hog-raisers but also feed millers.

Based on the latest data of the Bureau of Plant Industry (BAI), Briones said pigs from 14 regions, 31 provinces, 109 municipalities, and 472 barangays were hit by ASF.

"There are lots of hog-raisers, as well as feed millers suffering and still suffering. Some have sleepless nights because they worry that their pigs might be hit by the airborne disease anytime. ASF could turn them bankrupt, " according to Briones in an interview.

PPFP officer Fritz Chua said he was one of the many stakeholders who joined the vaccination trial, in which his pigs underwent vaccination testing.

He said that inoculated piglets last 30 August in Lobo, Batangas have produced 40 percent antibodies, which proves the effectiveness of the AVAC vaccines.

“Another blood sampling will take place on September 30, and if the vaccinated pigs will show 70 to 80 percent antibodies, then the vaccine is indeed effective. That is why by 1 October, permits for commercial use can be already released,” Chua said.

Last week, SINAG executive director Jayson Cainglet suggested waiting for six months as the World Organization for Animal Health has yet to approve a vaccine against ASF.

But Briones said they could not wait for six months: "We cannot wait for six months. Cainglet doesn't even own a single pig, which is why he is not in the position to say that. He doesn't know our sentiments," Briones said.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/24/calabarzon-hog-raisers-seek-approval-of-permits-to-buy-asf-vaccines>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Escudero: Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act to give more teeth vs smugglers

BY [HANNAH L. TORREGOZA](#)

Sep 24, 2024 03:36 PM

The Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act will give more teeth to government efforts against smugglers whose illegal activities are hurting the country's farmers, fisherfolk as well as Filipino consumers, Senate President Francis "Chiz" Escudero said.

The Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, a priority measure of the administration is scheduled to be signed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday, Sept. 26, 2024.

"Isang malaking hakbang patungo sa pagpapatupad ng layunin ng pamahalaan na makapag-hatid ng murang pagkain sa bawat tahanan ang pagpasa ng Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act (The passage of the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act is a big step towards the implementation of the government's goal of bringing cheap food to every home)," Escudero said.

"Smugglers, hoarders and profiteers have long served as a monkey wrench to our efforts toward attaining food security. With this law, we are optimistic that more Filipinos will now have greater access to affordable and nutritious food," the Senate leader stressed.

The measure is expected to combat rampant smuggling, profiteering and hoarding of agricultural products to make food more affordable and accessible to many Filipinos and provide better income for local farmers.

The senator said the new law sends a strong message that the government will use all its resources to prosecute individuals and groups who engage in smuggling, hoarding, profiteering and other uncompetitive and exploitative practices in the agriculture sector.

"Farmers, fisherfolk, livestock and poultry raisers, and legitimate traders have long been suffering from the operations of smugglers and other individuals and groups engaged in the manipulation of the market," he said.

“With the new law, we expect to see lower food prices and better incomes for our stakeholders in the agriculture sector,” he stressed.

The Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act will also protect the public from the influx and proliferation of sub-standard or even goods that are not fit for human consumption.

Under the proposed law, acts that aid in the commission of agricultural economic sabotage, such as the transport and storage of the smuggled goods, could result to a 20 to 30 years jail term and a fine of twice the value of the agricultural and fishery products subject of the crime.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/24/escudero-anti-agricultural-economic-sabotage>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

ASF vaccine procurement completed in December

[Helen Flores](#) - The Philippine Star

September 25, 2024 | 12:00am



At a sectoral briefing at Malacañang on September 24, 2024, President Marcos directed the DA to fast-track the vaccine rollout to curb the spread of the disease.

AFP / File

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) intends to complete the procurement of 600,000 doses of African swine fever (ASF) vaccine by December.

At a sectoral briefing at Malacañang yesterday, President Marcos directed the DA to fast-track the vaccine rollout to curb the spread of the disease.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the controlled trial in Lobo, Batangas involving the first 10,000 doses of ASF vaccine acquired through emergency procurement would be completed this month.

Tiu Laurel stressed the importance of a hastened vaccine rollout to restore hog growers' confidence in swine raising.

“Once they have confidence in the vaccine, they will start investing in farms again,” he said.

The DA is targeting an increase in hog production from the current 7.5 million to 14 million.

In a statement, the Presidential Communications Office said Marcos told Tiu Laurel that ASF remains a challenge in the government’s efforts to ease food inflation.

Earlier, hog raisers asked the Food and Drug Administration and the Bureau of Animal Industry to shorten the period of approval of permits for the commercial or emergency use of ASF vaccine from six months to one month.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/09/25/2387717/asf-vaccine-procurement-completed-december>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Smugglers and saboteurs

COMMONSENSE - **Marichu A. Villanueva** - The Philippine Star

September 25, 2024 | 12:00am

As our main staple, rice is the must-have basic food on every Filipino family table, rich or poor. It is so important that ensuring rice supply is a top priority in our country's national security concerns.

Incumbent President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. (PBBM) has seen up close and personal the rice crisis in our country during the administration of his late namesake father. The long lines of people queuing to buy rice ration was a dear lesson that the young Marcos obviously carried in his memories. So much so it became his campaign promise in his May 2022 presidential run to bring down the price of rice to P20 per kilo.

It was at a time when the price of rice breached to more than P50 per kilo, especially for well-milled rice, both locally produced and imported. PBBM assumed in concurrent capacity as Department of Agriculture (DA) secretary when he first assumed office in June 2022. For more than a year, the presidential convoy motored to and from Malacañang Palace and the DA head office on Elliptical Road in Quezon City as he juggled both jobs.

PBBM finally appointed fishing magnate and long-time friend Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. to be his agriculture secretary on Nov. 3 last year. It was as good a time as any to have a full-time agriculture secretary to focus on the pressing problems and concerns on our country's food security.

From artificial shortages of onions and other vegetable products to a new outbreak of African swine fever (ASF), the DA secretary has his hands full in his first year in office. This is not to mention crop and farm losses destroyed by typhoons and natural calamities that can disrupt the supply chain. On top of all these, the DA chief has to deal with man-made problems like bureaucratic maze and corruption in and out of the government involved in the agriculture sector he has to work with.

One of these is the very obvious orchestrated efforts to stop the price of rice from going down.

One of these efforts was Executive Order (EO) 62 signed by PBBM on June 21 this year that cut the tariff for imported rice from 35 percent to 15 percent. Issued during the congressional break when the Chief Executive can exercise legislative power to reduce or increase tariff rates, the Marcos administration was banking on EO 62 to help bring down the price of rice.

But lo and behold. We were suddenly made aware that around 888 container vans loaded with tons of imported rice, mostly from Vietnam, remain unclaimed at the south and north harbor ports of Manila. Managed by the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) headed by general manager Jay Daniel Santiago, the 888 containers were estimated to contain 23 million kilos of rice that have been overstaying and might go to waste.

Under the Customs' Modernization Tariff Act, Santiago cited, any shipment that has been cleared for pullout but remains in the port for more than 30 days is considered abandoned. Cleared means the shipment has paid taxes and other duties to the Bureau of Customs (BOC) and licensing from concerned DA agencies that it is safe and fit for human consumption.

Speaking before the Makati Business Club Tuesday last week, Tiu Laurel bared complaints reaching his office about the delayed release of shipments of the imported rice and other agricultural products. To which the PPA chief reacted by conducting on-site inspection to deny any port congestion. Literally pointing his finger at a number of containers piled up at the ports, Santiago admitted some containers have been staying in the port for 275 days, while another has been lying idle for 161 days. Another container has been in the port for 26 days, etc. etc.

“We will give the consignees until the end of the month, until Sept. 30. We promised the Department of Agriculture that by Oct. 1, we will report which among the containers filled with rice are staying in the ports for more than 30 days and then, we will go through the process and endorse that to the Bureau of Customs for appropriate action,” Santiago vowed.

For its part, BOC official spokesman Vincent Maronilla announced the government has two options for these unclaimed container vans. Either the BOC donates the imported rice to the Kadiwa stores of the DA, or auction them off if they are still fit for human consumption, Maronilla explained.

PBBM noted with optimism that rice prices in the Philippines would continue to go down as projected by his economic advisers, like the trend being seen in our neighbors in the region. “And it seems to be consistent again with the same experience of other ASEAN countries like Thailand and Vietnam,” the President told the sectoral meeting

that tackled inflation outlook and management strategies of the government at Malacañang yesterday.

According to the Presidential Communications Office, rice prices in Vietnam and Thailand have eased, with the landed cost of the imported food staple declining by 15 percent or about P7 per kilogram as of mid-September, following the implementation of lower tariffs under EO 62.

Briefing reporters after the Malacañang meeting yesterday, Tiu Laurel disclosed the DA is now looking into the companies allegedly involved in the container vans which have remained unclaimed in the Manila ports. Offhand, two of these companies found by the DA were no longer existing. He conceded the delays in the shipping and delivery of imported agricultural products, including tons of rice, were partly caused also by several storms and weather disturbances.

Following this latest rice brouhaha, the PPA and the DA have agreed to intensify the monitoring of the entry of rice and other prime commodities like pork, chicken and onions. Especially with the onset of the Christmas season, imported foodstuff like fresh fruit products peak during this period.

Indeed it is also very timely PBBM is set to sign into law tomorrow at Malacañang the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act. These smugglers will now face the harshest punishment as economic saboteurs.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/09/25/2387727/smugglers-and-saboteurs>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Marcos optimistic rice prices will ease further

[Alexis Romero](#) - The Philippine Star

September 25, 2024 | 12:00am



A vendor arranges his rice products for sale at a public market along M. Dela Fuente Street in Sampaloc, Manila on July 14, 2024.

STAR / Edd Gumban

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos yesterday expressed confidence that rice prices in the Philippines would continue to go down, just like the trend being seen in neighboring countries.

During a sectoral meeting that tackled inflation outlook and management strategies at Malacañang, Marcos said the price of the food staple in the country appears to be following the government’s projection.

“And it seems to be consistent again with the same experience of other ASEAN countries like Thailand and Vietnam,” the President said.

“So, I think as the time goes on, that should improve,” he added.

In a statement, the Presidential Communications Office said rice prices in Vietnam and Thailand have eased, with the landed cost of the imported food staple declining by 15 percent or about P7 per kilogram as of mid-September, following the implementation of lower tariffs under Executive Order No. 62. The order slashed rice tariff from 35 percent to 15 percent effective July 8.

Last week, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said rice prices are expected to start declining in October because of the reduced tariff.

The full impact of the tariff adjustment may be felt in January, the agriculture chief added. The government expects the tariff cut to reduce the price of rice by P5 to P7 per kilogram.

“But the full effects, for me, range from P5 to P7 so I will put it at P5 reduction in price. If the rice costs P52 per kilo now so by January it should be at P47. If the rice costs P59 now, it should be P45 by January. Those are my estimates,” said.

“But since demand for food usually spikes in December, we anticipate seeing a more substantial drop in rice prices by January,” Tiu Laurel noted.

He explained the expected drop in rice prices has not yet fully materialized because traders hiked rice imports in anticipation of an El Niño-driven supply shortage.

Financial assistance

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is proposing to amend a law governing the distribution of cash assistance to rice farmers.

If passed, the amended law will now include farm workers who do not own land as recipients of cash assistance sourced from excess tariff collections.

Under Republic Act 11598 or the Cash Assistance for Filipino Farmers Act, only farmers tilling two hectares and below of rice land are eligible to get financial assistance from the government, funded by the tariffs collected in excess of P10 billion from imported rice.

“There’s actually a problem that the DA is also encountering. Based on the law, farm workers are not included (since) the law specifically points to land owners and tenants with two hectares and below,” Iloilo Rep. Janette Garin said during the House plenary deliberations on the DA’s proposed 2025 budget.

“The hands of the DA are actually tied. In fact, the DA is suggesting to probably come up with a new law or amend the law to include farm workers,” added Garin. — **Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas, Romina Cabrera, Cecille Suerte Felipe**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/09/25/2387743/marcos-optimistic-rice-prices-will-ease-further>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

‘Marcos should be liable for rice hoarding, smuggling’ – groups

Philstar.com

September 24, 2024 | 10:17am



A cargo truck passes through portal-type X-ray machines at the Manila International Container Port on Thursday, Dec. 5, 2019.

BOC Public Information Office

MANILA, Philippines — Progressive groups want President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. held accountable for the 888 shipping vans, containing about 20 million kilograms of rice, that have been left unclaimed at the Manila port.

Bantay Bigas and Amihan National Federation of Peasant Women said reliance on importation and loosening of government control further contributed to the problem of hoarding and smuggling in the country.

“Kung hindi nabunyag ang issue ng hoarding o pagkatengga ng bigas sa Manila port, posibleng maibibenta pa itong lumang bigas o aging rice sa mamamayang Pilipino,” Cathy Estavillo, Amihan Secretary-General, said in a statement on Monday, September 23.

(If the issue on hoarding or the stalled rice at the Manila port was not exposed, it is possible that the aging rice will still be sold to Filipinos)

On Thursday, September 19, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel urged the Philippine Ports Authority to “prioritize the movement of these rice stocks to help increase supply” on the unclaimed shipping vans.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Assistant Secretary [Arnel de Mesa on Friday said](#) said traders of the unclaimed containers may face charges as they want to wait for the retail price of rice to increase, hence boosting revenue further, “that’s not right, that can constitute hoarding.”

According to the [Bureau of Customs](#), most shipments have been cleared for release and the remaining were in the process of being cleared. If left unclaimed for 30 days, the shipments will be declared abandoned.

“Dapat bantayan at magkaisa ang mamamayan para labanan ito dahil posibleng hindi na ito fit for human consumption. Sa lahat ng ito, walang ibang dapat managot kundi si Marcos dahil sa promotor siya ng Rice Liberalization Law, Executive Order No. 62 at iba pa,” Estavillo added.

(The Filipinos should unit and watch this to prevent the sale of aging rice as it could not be fit for human consumption. In all of these, no other individual should be held accountable but Marcos because he promoted the Rice Liberalization Law, Executive Order No. 62, among others)

EO 62 reduced tariffs on imported rice and other agricultural products from 35% to 15%. The [order aims to reduce](#) the market prices of rice.

“Dapat isulong ang lokal na produksyon dahil kailanma'y hindi ito sagot sa pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas,” she continued.

(We should push for the local production because rice importation is not the answer to the lower price of rice)

In 2023, the country was the world’s top rice importer with an estimated 3.8 million metric tons of imports supporting the 13.43 million metric tons of local production. — **intern Marco Luis Beech**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/09/24/2387435/marcos-should-be-liable-rice-hoarding-smuggling-groups>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DOST-PAGASA: Don't ignore 'weak' La Niña

[Rainier Allan Ronda](#) - The Philippine Star

September 25, 2024 | 12:00am



DOST-PAGASA weather observer Ruben Cunanan conducts a demo presentation of various constellations, planetary positions, and other celestial bodies as part of their presentation at the PAGASA Planetarium inside the PAGASA Science Garden Complex in Quezon City on September 24, 2024

STAR / Miguel De Guzman

MANILA, Philippines — While the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration has forecast a weak or even borderline La Niña phenomenon over the country starting this month up to May next year, there should be readiness for strong typhoons that a “weak version of this weather phenomenon could bring,” the DOST-PAGASA said.

Ana Liza Solis, chief of the climate monitoring and prediction section of the DOST-PAGASA climatology and agrometeorology division, stressed that they have historical data showing that previous years where the country experienced a “weak” La Niña had also seen several strong typhoons ravaging the country.

“We have to emphasize that historically, based on the data of PAGASA when there was weak La Niña, we had been hit with more super typhoons in the months of September,

October, November and December,” Solis said yesterday at a media forum in Quezon City.

She said there were two conditions experienced during these supposed weak La Niña years, borderline La Niña and three to four super typhoons battering the country.

“Historically, it happened. That means we should not make light of the weak La Niña,” Solis said, explaining that the conditions brought by the weak La Niña also brings with it favorable conditions for the buildup of super typhoons in areas off the Pacific Ocean.

Joan Mae Adelino, DOST-PAGASA weather specialist, in her presentation on their La Niña Alert or the latest ENSO (El Niño Southern Oscillation) Alert System Status, said they have placed a 71 percent chance of La Niña forming in a three-month period starting this September up to November that will likely persist until the first quarter of 2025 or January up to March next year.

The rainfall probability forecast leaned towards above normal rainfall during the forecast period.

“With these model probabilities, borderline La Niña or La Niña-like conditions will be likely during the forecast period,” the PAGASA ENSO Alert System Status update said.

Adelino said their forecast for tropical cyclones during the forecast period placed the number from a minimum four to a maximum of 10 typhoons to hit the country from October 2024 to March 2025.

Solis and Adelino were among the resource persons presented by the DOST-Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research Development at a press briefing held at the B Hotel in Quezon City yesterday, to showcase technologies developed by the DOST to ensure resilience in the agriculture sector.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/09/25/2387737/dost-pagasa-dont-ignore-weak-la-nia>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Marcos: Expect rice prices to fall further

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 03:15 PM September 24, 2024



President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr. leads another round of rice distribution to around 1,000 4Ps beneficiaries in this file photo taken on October 4, 2023, in Taguig City INQUIRER file photo / NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Tuesday said he is expecting rice prices to further decrease amid the current price trend happening in Southeast Asia.

According to the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) in a statement, Marcos made the pronouncement during a sectoral meeting on managing food and non-food inflation in Malacañang.

“Doon sa rice mukha namang sumusunod dun sa projections natin sa rice prices. And it seems to be consistent again with the same experience of other Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries like Thailand and Vietnam,” the PCO quoted Marcos as saying.

(In rice, it seems to be following our projections on rice prices. And it seems to be consistent again with the same experience of other Asean countries like Thailand and Vietnam.)

“So, I think as the time goes on, that should improve,” he added.



According to the PCO, rice was the top inflation driver, contributing 1.3 percentage points to inflation.

But Vietnam and Thailand rice prices moderated last month, said the PCO, citing data for September, which showed a decline in the prices of the staple. Furthermore, following the implementation of reduced tariffs under Executive Order No. 62, s. 2024, the landed cost of imported rice also further declined by 15 percent (around P7 per kilogram) as of mid-September.

Meanwhile, Marcos stressed that the country has to resort to sugar importation to ensure supply and stabilize prices as the retail price of refined sugar continues to be elevated at 35 percent, higher than the January 2022 level.

Moreover, the PCO said recommendations of incentivizing affected hog raisers were also raised during the meeting to address the effects of the African swine fever (ASF), as well as facilitating the procurement of the remaining 450,000 doses of the ASF vaccine once stocks become available.

The Department of Agriculture was also recommended to prioritize the provision of free doses of the ASF vaccine to smallholder swine raisers, who account for more than 70 percent of the country's swine inventory.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1986487/marcos-expect-continues-decline-in-prices-of-rice-in-ph>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Marcos to sign anti-agri economic sabotage bill this week

By: [Tina G. Santos](#) - Reporter / [@santostinaINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:45 AM September 25, 2024



Inquirer file photo

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos is expected to sign this week a new law meant to combat rampant smuggling, profiteering and hoarding of agricultural products, make food more affordable and accessible, and provide better income to local farmers.

Senate President Francis Escudero said the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, a priority measure of the administration, was scheduled to be signed by President Marcos on Thursday.

Escudero noted that the measure gives more teeth to government efforts to run after smugglers, whose illegal activities are hurting local farmers, fisherfolk and consumers.

RE “Smugglers, hoarders and profiteers have long served as a monkey wrench to our efforts toward attaining food security. With this law, we are optimistic that more Filipinos will now have greater access to affordable and nutritious food,” he said.

Under the new law, agricultural smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, cartel and financing of these crimes are classified as acts of economic sabotage and thus carry a penalty of life imprisonment and a fine of three times the value of the agricultural and fishery products involved in the crime.

For acts that aid in the commission of agricultural economic sabotage such as the transport and storage of the smuggled goods, the penalty imposed will be jail terms of 20 to 30 years and a fine of twice the value of the agricultural and fishery products.

Lower prices, higher incomes

“Farmers, fisherfolk, livestock and poultry raisers, and legitimate traders have long been suffering from the operations of smugglers and other individuals and groups engaged in the manipulation of the market. With the new law, we expect to see lower food prices and better incomes for our stakeholders in the agriculture sector,” Escudero said.

He added that the new law sends a strong message that the government will use all its resources to hold accountable individuals and groups engaged in uncompetitive and exploitative practices in the farm sector.

The Senate President pointed out that running after smugglers will also mean plugging leakages in the revenue stream of the government.

An Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council chaired by the President will be created to oversee the implementation of the law.

The members of the council will include the heads of the Department of Agriculture, Department of Justice, Department of Finance, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Transportation, Department of Trade and Industry, the Anti-Money Laundering Council, and the Philippine Competition Commission.

Possible hoarding

One representative each from the sugar, rice, corn, livestock and poultry, vegetables and fruits, fisheries and other aquatic products, and tobacco sectors will also be part of the council.

The government has blamed smuggling and hoarding for the persistently high prices of agricultural products.

On Tuesday, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said they are investigating the liability of two defunct companies listed as consignees of several container vans of imported rice found overstaying at the ports amid suspicion they were involved in hoarding.

At a press briefing in Malacañang, he said importers have also started taking out their stocks after the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) flagged them for overstaying.

“For the abandoned cargo, we checked that some of the companies are no longer existing. But we’re still going to pursue the investigation and we will get to the bottom of this,” he said.

Tiu Laurel made the statement following the disclosure by the PPA and the Bureau of Customs of the 888 container vans containing some 23 million kilos of imported rice that have been left in Manila ports for months.

According to Tiu Laurel, the importers reasoned that they allowed the rice shipments to stay at the ports to save on costs.

“They are saying that port charges are still cheaper than to have these stored in their own warehouses,” he said.

For the abandoned rice shipments, he said these will be seized by the government and may be auctioned or sold at government-run Kadiwa stores. —*with a report from Melvin Gascon*

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1986641/marcos-to-sign-anti-agri-economic-sabotage-bill-this-week>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Bicol farmers, fisherfolk suffer ‘severe losses’ due to storms

By: [Gillian Villanueva](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:05 AM September 25, 2024



CANAL CLEARING A farmer in Magarao, Camarines Sur province, clears assorted debris along irrigation canals after Tropical Storm Enteng (international name: Yagi) hit parts of Bicol and Eastern Visayas regions on Sunday. The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) in Bicol has started cleanup activities to prevent clogging and ensure water flow in its canals. —Photo courtesy of NIA Region V

MANILA, Philippines — A group of farmers from the Bicol region has asked the government for help after recent weather disturbances damaged almost all of their rice crops, leaving them “barely managing” to harvest around five to 10 sacks of rice each from their still flooded fields.

In a statement the other day, the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Bicol (KMB) called for immediate aid and compensation after Tropical Storm “Enteng” and successive typhoons caused P537 million worth of damage to rice, corn and high-value crops.

After Enteng, the country experienced successive weather disturbances, starting with Tropical Storm Ferdie, Tropical Depression Gener and Tropical Storm Helen. Together, they caused widespread flooding in many areas due to heavy rains and the enhanced southwest monsoon.

According to the statement, more than 18,000 farmers and fisherfolk from the provinces of Albay, Camarines Sur and Catanduanes were affected.

“Farmers are experiencing 80 percent to 100 percent losses in their expected rice harvest income, with farming costs ranging from P30,000 to P40,000 for low-end expenses, and P60,000 to P70,000 for higher-end expenses,” the KMB said.

Floodwaters, which could take at least a month to subside, have also displaced families from their homes, it added.

Rice packs not enough

The KMB said the Department of Social Welfare and Development had distributed more than 200,000 food packs in Bicol region but these were “woefully inadequate” as farmers have experienced “severe losses” in their livelihood.

It urged the government to send help as the affected farmers were particularly in need of food, hygiene kits, water containers, tarpaulins, blankets and mosquito nets, as well as building materials for their damaged homes.

The group also said the farmers should be given land restoration support, such as dike repairs and mud clearing, and production support through seeds, farming inputs, capital for land preparation and replanting, farm animals, tools and machinery.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1986639/bicol-farmers-fisherfolk-suffer-severe-losses-due-to-storms>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA creates new unit to support co-ops

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

Inquirer Business / 09:33 AM September 24, 2024



The Department of Agriculture (DA) unveils support services for agricultural cooperatives nationwide to empower farmers and fishers and increase their income. INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has unveiled support services for agricultural cooperatives nationwide to empower farmers and fishers and increase their income.

In a statement on Monday, the DA said the newly created Agricultural Cooperative Enterprise Development Services (ACED Services) would streamline efforts and optimize resources allotted for supporting cooperatives.

“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,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

ACED Services will be spearheaded by Agriculture Undersecretary Roger Navarro.

ACED Services would be providing comprehensive and effective extension services and training for farm cooperatives, farmers/fisherfolk associations and other agricultural entrepreneurs in collaboration with other government agencies, private institutions and civil society organizations.

It would also coordinate efforts and oversee the implementation of projects to address developmental gaps and adjust strategies as needed.

It would be developing a program to help transition pre-cooperatives and farmers and fisherfolk associations into full-fledged agricultural cooperatives.

To achieve digital transformation among co-ops, ACED Services will promote the use of data analytics, online marketplaces, and climate adaptation tools to boost their productivity, sustainability and resilience.

<https://business.inquirer.net/481935/da-creates-new-unit-to-support-co-ops>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA targets to finish ASF vaccine procurement by end of 2024

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 01:18 PM September 24, 2024



HEALTH CHECK Pigs are inspected at a livestock checkpoint in Cavite province for symptoms of African Swine Fever to prevent the spread of the disease. — RICHARD A. REYES

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Tuesday said it is targeting to finish the procurement of 600,000 African Swine Fever (ASF) vaccines by the end of 2024.

“We hope to complete the procurement of 600,000 doses by the end of December this year,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a Palace briefing.

Laurel also said the procurement of the initial 10,000 doses is expected to be finished by the end of September.

“And the schedule for the award for the next 450,000 doses is October 10th, of which we will take delivery of 150,000 doses by then,” he added.

According to the agriculture chief, expediting the release of ASF vaccines will benefit backyard farmers and livestock growers as they will be confident to invest in hog raising again.

Once the ASF vaccines have been fully rolled out, the DA will focus on repopulating hogs to regain the previous record of 14 million heads, which decreased to 7.5 million based on the DA’s latest estimates.

“Hopefully everything will be implemented on schedule. Sana next year puro repopulation na lang tayo (I hope next year we will just focus on repopulation),” Laurel said.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1986439/da-targets-to-finish-asf-vaccine-procurement-by-end-of-2024>

BUSINESS WORLD:

PHL hoping S.Korea FTA can take effect this year

September 24, 2024 | 8:34 pm



REUTERS

THE PHILIPPINES continues to expect the free trade agreement (FTA) with South Korea to take effect within the year with ratification still pending on the Korean side, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

“When it comes to the effectivity of the FTA, we are targeting effectivity this year. At least on our side, we’re done with the ratification process,” Trade Undersecretary Allan B. Gepty told *BusinessWorld* on the sidelines of a budget hearing at the Senate on Tuesday.

“We’re just waiting for South Korea to finish their full domestic process of ratification. But I understand they are now in the process of seeking the approval of their National Assembly,” he added.

He said the optimism stems from the scheduled visit of the South Korean leader next month.

“We are very happy that yesterday, finally, the Senate concurred on the ratification of the bilateral FTA. That is timely because I understand that the president of South Korea (Yoon Suk Yeol) will be visiting the country in October,” he said.

“Of course, it is also good news for our banana industry because if there is one sector that will mainly benefit from the FTA, that will be them,” he added.

South Korea was the country’s third-biggest banana export market last year, accounting for \$164.54 million or 13% of fresh banana exports in 2023.

In the first quarter, banana exports to South Korea hit \$102.58 million, well ahead of the year-earlier pace.

On Monday, the Senate ratified the FTA between the Philippines and South Korea, which will remove Philippine tariffs on 96.5% of goods from South Korea and Korean tariffs on 94.8% of Philippine products.

Signed in September last year, the FTA allowed the Philippines to secure the elimination of 1,531 tariff lines on agricultural goods, of which 1,417 would be removed after the FTA enters into force.

It will also remove 9,909 tariff lines of industrial goods, 9,747 of which would be removed after the deal enters into force.

According to Mr. Gepty, the agreement will come into force on the first day of the second month, or on such other date as the parties may agree, after they notify the completion of all necessary domestic legal procedures.

— **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/24/623690/phl-hoping-s-korea-fta-can-take-effect-this-year/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Food import monitoring tie-up eyed by DA, PPA, Customs

September 24, 2024 | 8:34 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/WALTER BOLLOZOS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Tuesday that it is seeking to collaborate with the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) and Bureau of Customs to improve its farm import estimates.

“This would help up improve our supply and price forecasting and avoid artificial shortages caused by product hoarding,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said in a statement.

He added that the data gathered could determine which importers that need to be blacklisted.

Mr. Laurel said the objective of the tieup is to better time imports of farm goods to optimize the food supply.

The DA said that it is also looking to “ensure that imported agricultural food products are immediately delivered to warehouses and sold on the market.”

Last week, Mr. Laurel said the delay in lowering rice prices was due to bottlenecks at the ports, with imports remaining stalled after being landed.

The PPA has said that about 20,000 metric tons (MT) of imported rice have been unclaimed, noting that consignees could be waiting for the price of rice to rise because their cost of acquisition was high.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. signed Executive Order No. 62 in June, lowering the tariff on imported rice to 15% from 35% until 2028, to help lower the price of the grain and blunt its impact on inflation.

Mr. Laurel said that rice prices could begin to ease by mid-October, while its full impact may be felt by January next year.

The DA has said that the lower tariffs on rice would lead to a P5 to P7 per kilogram drop in imported rice prices.

Rice imports totaled 3.09 million MT as of Sept. 19, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/24/623688/food-import-monitoring-tie-up-eyed-by-da-ppa-customs/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

US biotech firm expands footprint in Philippines

September 24, 2024 | 8:33 pm



THERMO FISHER SCIENTIFIC

US BIOTECH company Thermo Fisher Scientific, Inc. said it is expanding its Philippine workforce to staff a new Quezon City facility.

“Our new global business services center will enhance and expand our operational presence in the region and play a pivotal role within our extensive Global Shared Services network,” Konrad Bauer, senior vice-president, Global Business Services at Thermo Fisher Scientific, told *BusinessWorld* in an e-mail interview on Sept. 23.

On Aug. 29, the company cut the ribbon on the center, which will provide specialized financial and customer services to its clients in the healthcare and biotech sectors.

The center expands Thermo Fisher’s global shared services network, which consists of five locations worldwide.

He said the new facility will start with a team of 100 employees, with plans to increase to over 450 by the end of 2026.

“We’re also building on our presence in the Philippines, where we already have 1,400 colleagues working on clinical trials and commercial activities,” Mr. Bauer said.

Thermo Fisher aims to enhance its support for regional customers in the healthcare and biotech sectors using the local talent base, he added.

“Our plans include partnering with universities for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education and internships, supporting national science objectives through government engagement, and participating in community initiatives that promote science and technology,” Mr. Bauer said.

He also noted that the biotech industry in the Philippines is “on the verge of an exciting transformation,” driven by rising investment and strong government support.

“Key advancements are unfolding in healthcare with innovative drug development and diagnostics, agricultural biotech with breakthroughs in crop yields and sustainability, and environmental biotech with cutting-edge waste management and bioremediation,” Mr. Bauer added.

He also noted that research institutions like the Philippine Genome Center are fueling this growth, and a supportive regulatory environment and enhanced intellectual property protections are paving the way for a “vibrant future.”

“Ultimately, our efforts in the Philippines are designed to help advance scientific knowledge and innovation that address some of the world’s most pressing challenges,” Mr. Bauer said. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/24/623687/us-biotech-firm-expands-footprint-in-philippines/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Palay production may decline due to La Niña

September 25, 2024 | 12:32 am



Farmers inspect rice crops affected by floods in La Union in this Oct. 12, 2021 file photo. — PHILIPPINE STAR/MICHAEL VARCAS

By **Adrian H. Halili** and **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**, *Reporters*

THE ANTICIPATED La Niña weather pattern is expected to pull down the Philippines' palay (unmilled rice) production for the rest of the year amid risks of heavy rains and intense flooding, analysts said.

In a report, Fitch Solutions' unit BMI said the impact of La Niña on rice production in Southeast Asia "will be shaped via the precise timing of the onset of La Niña conditions (and the extent to which it overlaps with critical stages of crop development) as well as the eventual duration and severity of the event itself."

"The likelihood of a La Niña event posing headwinds to regional rice production will increase with both the duration and severity of the event," it added.

Latest data from the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) showed that there is a 66% chance of La Niña occurring from September to November and will likely persist until the first quarter.

BMI said the impact of La Niña-linked above-average rainfall on farming in Southeast Asia would depend on the severity of the weather event.

Aside from intense rainfall and flooding, BMI said there is also the risk of rain-induced waterlogging.

PAGASA earlier said that the La Niña heightens the likelihood of tropical cyclones, low-pressure areas, and the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), and intensifies the Southwest Monsoon.

Former Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar said he expects a drop in annual palay production this year due to La Niña.

“The number one problem is the impact of La Niña coupled with the late distribution of agricultural inputs provided by the National Government. There will be a decline of production from the 20 million MT (metric tons) last year,” he said in a text message.

In 2023, palay production reached 20.06 million MT.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) earlier trimmed its palay production estimate to 20.1 million MT for 2024 from 20.

Fermin D. Adriano, a former Agriculture undersecretary, said in a Viber message that palay production would likely drop to between 19.3 million MT and 19.5 million MT this year.

“With El Niño and then recent flooding in rice growing areas of Central Luzon, I don’t know whether DA will get 1% to 2% growth rate (for agricultural production),” Mr. Adriano said in a Viber message.

The DA had set a 1-2% growth target for agricultural production this year, taking into account the impact of the El Niño and La Niña weather events.

“The possibility of an increase in output for 2024 is bleak, given the 500,000 (MT) drop in palay harvests in the first semester, plus the potential impact of La Niña on standing crops in the coming months,” Federation of Free Farmers National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said in a Viber message.

Mr. Montemayor said that the projected drop in palay production may be attributed to delayed planting by rice farmers. This would push back the palay harvest to the fourth quarter, he added.

PAGASA has so far logged nine tropical cyclones which have entered the Philippine Area of Responsibility this year.

Farm damage from weather disturbances was estimated at P23.19 billion from January to Sept. 4, according to the DA. This includes the effects of the El Niño, shearline, Southwest Monsoon, Typhoon Aghon, Typhoon Carina, and the Severe Tropical Depression Enteng.

The estimated volume loss for rice was at 373,000 MT, during the nine-month period. The DA projects an average of 500,000 MT to 600,000 MT in rice losses every year.

“The damage reports don’t sound so bad, I’m not surprised if we hit 20 million MT (this year),” Roehlano M. Briones, a senior research fellow with the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, said in a Viber message.

Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) Executive Director Jayson H. Cainglet said that the country's rice supply would remain sufficient given the increase in rice imports.

"Those damaged by Habagat (Southwest Monsoon) and heavy rain, farmers just need to be assisted immediately to replant," he said in a Viber message.

"What we are worried about is the big drop in farmgate price of palay during these lean months — an indication there is a lot of rice in the market, and this would further decrease once the harvest season begins," Mr. Cainglet added.

Philippine rice imports have totaled 3.09 million MT as of Sept. 19, data from the Bureau of Plant Industry showed.

Meanwhile, BMI said above-average rainfall in the region can either be beneficial or detrimental to rice production, BMI said.

The La Niña event increases the likelihood of excess rainfall, which poses a threat to rice cultivation, BMI said.

"Land that is subject to drought or an extended period of below-average rainfall could also be more at risk of wildfires during Southeast Asia's fire season. Conversely, low soil moisture levels accumulated during the El Niño period can be vulnerable to water logging in the event of intense rainfall," it added.

PAGASA in its latest farm weather advisory also called on farmers to "prepare for wetter conditions."

"Wet weather promotes fungal development and can cause damage to stored farm products, reduce the quality, viability and market price of the grains. Thus, it is advised to keep barns and crop storage rooms in good, dry, and well-ventilated condition," the state weather service said.

BMI also noted that many agricultural producers in Southeast Asia continue to feel the impact of El Niño through "low soil moisture levels and depleted irrigation water reservoirs."

"Moreover, several areas of Southeast Asia remained in drought conditions as of July 2024, including parts of Cambodia, Myanmar, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam."

The latest PAGASA bulletin showed that four provinces in Luzon, 12 provinces in the Visayas, and 10 provinces in Mindanao experienced meteorological drought; 17 provinces in Mindanao were under dry spell, and six provinces in Luzon experienced dry conditions.

However, BMI data also showed that the impact of La Niña on rice production "tends to be weaker" than the El Niño.

"We find that the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events pose a downside risk to rice production in Southeast Asia, but that El Niño events tend to have a more significant impact on observed rice yield anomalies than La Niña events," it said.

“In addition, we find that the relationship between La Niña events and regional rice production is not unidirectional, with weak events tending to support output levels and strong events posing headwinds to output.”

Certain countries in the region are also more vulnerable to La Niña than others, it added.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2024/09/25/623633/palay-production-may-decline-due-to-la-nia/>

MANILA STANDARD

Rice prices to decline by as much as P7/kilo in January—Agri chief

By Manila Standard

September 25, 2024, 12:45 am

The Marcos administration forecasts significant rollbacks in the retail prices of rice, amid the domestic harvest season and an overall softening in the Southeast Asian market.

On Tuesday, President Marcos said in a Presidential Communications Office (PCO) statement that the movement of rice prices has been consistent with their expectations and there is reason to believe that they will go down further.

“It seems that the prices are within our projections. And it seems to be consistent again with the same experience of other ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] countries like Thailand and Vietnam,” the chief executive noted.

Additionally, rice harvest in the Philippines typically begins before October, ensuring consumers have sufficient stocks of the staple for the year’s fourth quarter.

“So, I think as time goes on, that [retail prices of rice] should improve,” he added.

For his part, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said that rice prices may decline further as early as October after the government cut tariff on imported rice from 35 percent to 15 percent in July to curb food inflation.

The price of rice per kilo may even go down by as much as P7 per kilo by January due to the substantial tariff reduction, he added.

Economic managers touted that headline inflation slowed to 3.3 percent last month from 4.4 percent in July, mainly due to the decrease in food inflation.

Specifically, food inflation eased to 4.2 percent in August from 6.7 percent the previous month.

The reduction, they said, was due to lower prices of rice which went down to 14.7 percent in August from 20.9 percent in July.

Rice inflation last month was the lowest recorded since the 13.2 percent recorded in October 2023.

Still, rice prices remained the top driver of food inflation in August, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority's (PSA) latest inflation report.

Meanwhile, the PCO reported that the landed cost of the imported staple declined by 15 percent, or around P7 per kilo, as of mid-September, following the implementation of reduced tariffs under Executive Order No. 62.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314501951/rice-prices-to-decline-by-as-much-as-p7-kilo-in-january-agri-chief.html>

MANILA STANDARD

Outstanding urban gardens get DA prizes



By DA News

September 23, 2024, 7:00 pm

The Department of Agriculture (DA) recently recognized the outstanding urban and peri-urban gardens nationwide.

“We celebrate those who have transformed limited spaces into thriving gardens, those who have enhanced their surroundings while deepening our understanding of food sustainability,” said Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said.

The 2024 National Search for the Best Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Garden aims to honor the champions of community-based gardening, celebrate their innovation, sustainability, and dedication, and strengthen the stakeholders’ partnership with the DA to produce safe and quality produce in metropolitan areas.

The Quezon City-based San Diego Elementary School won the award for the Best Macrogarden Category and received P100,000 cash prize, while the Zennor Hydroponics Farm in Palauig, Zambales bagged the title for the Best Microgarden Category with P100,000 cash prize.

First place winners received P70,000 cash, while second placers were awarded with P30,000 cash.

For the Macrogardens Category, the 1st and 2nd Runner Ups are the Bausa Integrated Farm and Training Center, Inc. located in San Ildefonso, Bulacan and the Jaya’s Secret Garden in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon.

The Domegarden in Itogon, Benguet and the Cagape’s Crisp Greens in Panabo City, Davao won the first and second place awards under the Microgardens Category.

“As we reflect on your achievements, let us acknowledge the crucial role urban agriculture plays in addressing global challenges. From mitigating climate change to enhancing food resilience and improving mental well-being, your gardens serve purposes beyond mere aesthetics,” Laurel said. DA News

He added the importance of urban agriculture as the way for communities to thrive serving as the first step towards eradicating hunger and maximizing available land. DA News

The national search that was opened to all established and organized urban and peri-urban agriculture gardens in the country also recognized the following:

- Special Citation for Women Emancipation through Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture:

- Gulayan sa Home for Girls Otso (DSWD Home for Girls), Palo, Leyte
- Luyahan Rural Improvement Club Organization, Zamboanga City
- Special Citation for Promoting Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture for the Youth:
 - San Diego Elementary School, Quezon City
 - Feliz Academy’s Inc’s Federico Villarin Santiago Center for Research and Sustainable Agriculture, Villasis, Pangasinan
 - The Apostolic Vicariate of Taytay Farm, Taytay, Palawan
- Special Citation for Social Equity through Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture:
 - Eco Warriors Communal Garden, Cagayan de Oro
 - Gulayan sa Barangay Bagong Kanlungan (BJMP Ligao City District Jail), Ligao City, Albay
 - Stephen’s Sweet Garden, Passi City, Iloilo
 - Bitoon JPT Ediscape Garden, Iloilo City
 - MACATABO Farm, Davao City
 - Barani Minipark Urban Garden, Batac, Ilocos Norte
 - Vergara Community Garden, General Santos City, SOCCSKSARGEN
 - Cagape’s Crisp Garden, Panabo City
 - Gulayan ng Komunidad sa Gawad Kalinga (GULAYKOSAGK), Calamba, Laguna
- Special Citation for Climate Action
 - Jaya’s Secret Garden, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon

- Barangay 18 Cabagñan West Organic Garden Association, Legazpi City, Albay
- Bagong Kalsada Community Garden Calamba Fruit Planters Association (CAFRUTAS), Calamba City, Laguna
- Fit & Fab Farm, CAR
- FCCT-Integrated Organic Demo Farm Integrated-Diversified Farm, Tuburan, Cebu
- Oliver Eco Village, Butuan City
- Javenri Harvest Farm, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan
- Special Citation for Cutting-edge Urban Agriculture Technologies
- Domegarden, CAR
- Zennor Hydroponics Farm, Zambales
- Keisha’s Garden, General Santos City
- Minerva Farms, Isabela
- Special Citation for Education and Awareness in Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture:
- Manga National High School (Integrated-Diversified Organic Farming System Learning Site), Tagbilaran, Bohol
- Kingspoint Joy of Urban Farming, Quezon City
- Bausa Integrated Farm and Training Center Inc., San Ildefonso, Bulacan
- Gulayan sa Cangumbang Elementary School, Palo, Leyte
- BLGU Calanipa, Surigao City

San Diego Elementary School Principal Emely Pelobello and Zennor Hydroponics Farm Founder Rafael Pagaling expressed their gratitude to the DA for the recognition. They also

committed to continue as DA partners in promoting community-based urban and peri-urban agriculture in the country. DA News

<https://www.manilastandard.net/spotlight/environmental-and-sustainability/314501299/outstanding-urban-gardens-get-da-prizes.html>

Marcos sees lower rice prices

By Kristina Maralit
September 25, 2024

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. expressed optimism on Tuesday that the cost of rice would stabilize consistent with current prices in Southeast Asia.

"So, I think as the time goes on, that should improve," the President said during a sectoral meeting on managing food and non-food inflation in Malacañang, noting rice prices seem to be consistent again with other Asean countries like Thailand and Vietnam.

Rice was the Philippines' top inflation driver, contributing 1.3 percentage points to inflation. Inflation further decelerated to 14.7 percent, but prices remained elevated.

Prices of rice in Vietnam and Thailand moderated last month, as data for September showed a decline in prices.

The landed cost of the imported rice declined by 15 percent, or around P7 per kilogram, as of mid-September, following the implementation of reduced tariffs under Executive Order 62, series of 2024.

Marcos added the country had to resort to sugar importation to ensure ample supply and stabilize prices.

The retail price of refined sugar remains elevated at 35 percent, higher than the January 2022 level before prices spiked.

Overall inflation eased from 4.4 percent in July 2024 to 3.3 percent in August 2024 due to slower food and non-food inflation, with rice being the major inflation driver.

Finance Secretary Ralph Recto said in a briefing following the sectoral meeting that projects inflation would likely fall to 2.5 percent by the end of September.

Average inflation for the period January to August 2024 reached 3.6 percent, within the government's target of 3.0 percent to 4.0 percent for the year.

Authorities reported that food inflation decelerated from 6.4 percent in July 2024 to 3.9 percent in August, with slower inflation in rice, meat, bread, other cereals and ready-made food products. Deflation was recorded in fish, vegetables and sugar.

Non-food inflation, on the other hand, eased from 3.1 percent in July 2024 to 2.9 percent in August 2024. Among the top contributors were restaurants and accommodation services, housing, water, electricity, gas, and other fuels.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/25/news/national/marcos-sees-lower-rice-prices/1973844>

Marcos to sign new anti-smuggling law

By [Javier Joe Ismael](#)
September 25, 2024

SENATE President Francis Escudero said on Tuesday that the proposed Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act was scheduled for signing by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Friday.

Escudero added that the measure, which will address widespread smuggling, profiteering and hoarding of agricultural products, aims to raise the income of farmers and make food more affordable to Filipinos.

"Farmers, fisherfolk, livestock and poultry raisers, and legitimate traders have long suffered from smugglers' operations and other individuals and groups manipulating the market. With the new law, we expect to see lower food prices and better incomes for our stakeholders in the agriculture sector," the senator said.

"Smugglers, hoarders and profiteers have long served as a monkey wrench to our efforts toward attaining food security. With this law, we are optimistic that more Filipinos will have greater access to affordable and nutritious food," Escudero added.

Under the measure, agricultural smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, cartels and financing of these crimes were classified as acts of economic sabotage and thus carry a penalty of life imprisonment and a fine of three times the value of the agricultural and fishery products subject to the crime.

For acts that aid in the commission of agricultural economic sabotage, such as transporting and storing smuggled goods, the penalty is a 20- to

30-year jail term and a fine of twice the value of the agricultural and fishery products subject to the crime.

Escudero said the measure would protect the public from substandard food unfit for human consumption and plug leakages in the revenue stream.

"The law will also result in improved collections by our revenue-collecting agencies, which will translate to delivering more services to our people."

An anti-agricultural economic sabotage council would be created to oversee the law's implementation.

It would be led by the President or the designated permanent representative, while its members include the secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture, Justice, Finance, the Interior and Local Government, Transportation, and Trade and Industry, as well as the heads of the Anti-Money Laundering Council and the Philippine Competition Commission.

One representative each from the sectors of sugar, rice, corn, livestock and poultry, vegetables and fruits, fisheries and other aquatic products, as well as tobacco, would be included in the council.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/25/news/national/marcos-to-sign-new-anti-smuggling-law/1973827>

FDA, BAI urged to speed up approval of ASF vaccine

By [Red Mendoza](#) and [Kristina Maralit](#)
September 24, 2024

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Bureau of Animal Industry were urged to shorten the approval period of permit for African Swine Fever (ASF) vaccine from six months to one month.

AGAP Partylist Rep. Nicanor Briones and leader of the Pork Producers Federation of the Philippines said shortening the approval period of ASF vaccine could save many businesses.

"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 in a statement on Tuesday.

He added that the vaccine's trial last year was successful.

Briones said that 36 of the 41 pigs inoculated in Lobo, Batangas on August 30 survived ASF while developing antibodies for the disease.

"On September 30, blood samples will be taken again from these pigs. If tests show 70 to 80 percent antibodies in the animals, they are immune from ASF," Briones added, noting P3.6 billion doses of vaccine was needed to inoculate hogs nationwide.

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

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the expedited release of ASF vaccines, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu said on Tuesday.

"The first 10,000 doses will be finished... by the end of the month. The schedule for the award for the next 450,000 doses this October 10, of which we will take delivery of 150,000 doses by then," Tiu said.

"We hope to complete the procurement of 600,000 doses by [the] end of December this year," he added.

The Department of Agriculture and the FDA said 150,000 doses of the ASF vaccine from a Vietnam-based company have already been dispensed in September. The distribution prioritized eligible commercial farms, semi-commercial enterprises, and clustered backyard farms.

"Once confidence in this vaccine has been established, then they will start investing again in farms. Even the commercial ones will repopulate," Tiu said, adding the DA plans an increase in hog production from the current 7.5 million to 14 million.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/24/news/fda-bai-urged-to-speed-up-approval-of-asf-vaccine/1973768>

Import permit changes eyed to boost deliveries

By [Janine Alexis Miguel](#)
September 25, 2024

TO guarantee quick distribution of agricultural products, the Department of Agriculture (DA) is considering a proposal to add requirements for import permits.

The revisions refer to import permits issued by DA agencies, particularly the Bureau of Plant Industry and the Bureau of Animal Industry, the department said on Tuesday, to ensure prompt delivery of food items to warehouses and readily available for market sale.

The DA has yet to specify the exact requirements it plans to introduce, but the agency recognizes the urgency of more efficient logistics to prevent disruption in the supply chain of agricultural products.

The proposal was made following previous reports of delays of rice shipments at some of the country's ports. Current processes allow imported agricultural products, such as rice, to remain in transit for extended periods.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said delays have contributed to fluctuations in rice prices, affecting both consumers and farmers. He thanked the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) and Bureau of Customs for mitigating the delays.

The PPA last week said that, out of 888 container vans loaded with food products, including rice, that have been sitting in Manila ports, around 300 have been released through their consignees.

PPA general manager Jay Santiago said he expects more to be out of the ports before the end of the month.

However, DA Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said the volume of rice in the overstaying containers is just a small percentage of the 3.09 million metric tons of imported rice and "won't affect rice prices in the market."

He pointed out "prices should ease further as the full impact of the recent tariff reduction is felt by January," echoing Tiu Laurel's projection that retail prices could start easing by the middle of October due to the slashing of import tariffs to 15 percent from 35 percent starting July 8.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/25/business/top-business/import-permit-changes-eyed-to-boost-deliveries/1973876>

Drop in palay prices alarms farmers' group

By Janine Alexis Miguel

September 25, 2024

THE Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) is alarmed over a drop in palay (unmilled rice) prices at the start of the harvest season amid the impending arrival of cheap imported rice.

The FFF said freshly harvested palay is being bought from farmers in Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, Mindoro Occidental, Sultan Kudarat and North Cotabato from P21 to P23 per kilogram (kg) and as low as P16.50/kg in some parts of Nueva Ecija.

"Traders are afraid the fresh harvests will coincide with the arrival of cheap imports, which will result in oversupply. So they play safe by buying low from farmers," FFF National Manager Raul Montemayor said in a statement.

Tariffs on rice imports fell to 15 percent from the previous 35 percent, as mandated by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s Executive Order 62 to help manage food inflation caused by the rising retail cost of rice in the past months.

However, the FFF noted that the retail price of rice has since decreased by an average of only P0.40/kg, or 0.5 percent, as opposed to the promised drop of P6 to P7/kg.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. earlier said retail rice prices are projected to start declining in October due to the import tariff cut. The full impact, Tiu Laurel added, may be felt in January 2025.

The FFF disputed claims that the retail market's slow reaction to the tariff cut was due to traders selling their rice stocks bought at higher prices in previous months.

"It does not make sense for traders to hold on to cheap stocks imported with a 15-percent tariff while retail prices are still high. They are, in fact, maximizing their profits now instead of passing on their tariff savings to consumers," Montemayor said.

The FFF estimates the government lost P3.4 billion in customs duties from 581,000 tons of dutiable imports due to tariff reductions in July and August.

The Department of Agriculture should focus on helping farmers cope with La Niña and the anticipated drop in palay prices, said the FFF.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/25/business/top-business/drop-in-palay-prices-alarms-farmers-group/1973875>

DA tweaking agri import rules to curb ‘overstayers’

Ada Pelonia

September 25, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is eyeing additional requirements for import permits issued by its agencies to ensure the immediate delivery and sale of imported farm products to warehouses and markets.

This, after a recent investigation by the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) revealed that about 888 “overstaying” container vans loaded with agricultural commodities, including rice, have been sitting in Manila ports as consignees delay their withdrawal.

Port officials suspected that consignees were trying to reduce warehousing cost or just waiting for prices of the food items to rise as they appear to have imported these items at higher prices.

However, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said that based on data reviewed by DA, the delay in the shipping and delivery of imported farm products was caused by several storms and weather disturbances, including recent typhoons.

“The delay was caused by force majeure,” Laurel said in a statement.

He noted that closer cooperation with the Bureau of Customs (BOC) and PPA would also help DA in enhancing management of domestic food supply and ensuring food security.

“This would help up improve our supply and price forecasting and avoid artificial shortages caused by product hoarding. Data that we will gather will also help us determine which importers to blacklist, if needed,” he said.

PPA General Manager Jay Santiago said in a recent press conference that around 300 container vans have been pulled out by their consignees. He expected more to be removed from the ports before the end of the month.

Santiago said that by October 1, the PPA would send a report to the DA regarding this and ask the BOC to declare these shipments as abandoned for proper disposition.

‘No budge in rice prices’

Meanwhile, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said that even if those overstaying container vans were loaded with rice, the volume was “just a small percentage” of the 3 million metric tons (MMT) of imported rice that has entered the country and “[would not] affect rice prices in the market.”

He also noted that retail prices of rice were already starting to decline from around P50 a kilo to P42 for imported well-milled rice and P45 for local well-milled rice.

“And prices should ease further as the full impact of the recent tariff reduction is felt by January, De Mesa added.

Laurel earlier said that he expects rice prices to start easing by the mid-October due to the reduction in import tariffs to 15 percent from 35 percent starting July 8.

He said the full impact of the tariff cut may be felt by January as the rice supply bought before the tariff reduction was fully consumed.

Economic managers estimate that the tariff reduction could lead to a decrease of around P5 to P7 per kilo of rice.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/25/da-tweaking-agri-import-rules-to-curb-overstayers/>

DA pushes irrigation expansion, urban farming for food security

Bless Aubrey Ogerio
September 25, 2024

IN a bid to address food security amid pressing climate issues, the Department of Agriculture (DA) launched initiatives to expand irrigation and promote urban farming during a Bagong Pilipinas Town Hall meeting in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, on September 18.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr., represented by Agriculture Region III Executive Director Eduardo Lapuz Jr., said that the government's priorities are not only focused on boosting agricultural production but also on ensuring long-term sustainability in the sector.

“By expanding irrigation and promoting urban farming, we're not only safeguarding our food supply but also providing farmers with the tools to adapt to the challenges of climate change and resource scarcity,” he said during the two-day Lakbay Palay event organized by the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice).

A key component of the DA's four-year plan is the expansion of irrigation coverage, which can increase the country's irrigated land from approximately 1.6 million hectares to 2 million hectares by 2028.

This comprehensive plan, presented in April this year, includes several major projects: a \$320 million Philippine Solar Irrigation Project, a \$350 million internationally-funded initiative for farm-to-market bridge construction, a budget allocation of \$400 to \$500 million for post-harvest facilities, and plans for logistics chain modernization to enhance the country's ports.

The agriculture department encourages urban agriculture, which integrates hydroponics, mushroom production, and vertical gardens to optimize agricultural output in urban settings.

The effectiveness of these initiatives, however, has come under scrutiny. Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas chairman Danilo Ramos said that under the current Marcos administration, the National Irrigation Administration has initiated 27 flagship infrastructure projects in 2023, including 13 irrigation facilities.

In addition to enhancing irrigation, recent collaborations with the Department of Health also push urban farming practices in public hospitals to encourage innovative use of limited space for cultivating fresh produce.

Attendees were also introduced to a mobile solar-powered irrigation system (SPIS), an innovative technology that offers reliable and sustainable irrigation, allowing farmers to save up to P1 per cubic meter of water compared to conventional fuel-powered pumps.

Joey Villarama, Task Force El Niño spokesman and Presidential Communications Office Assistant Secretary, underscored the urgency for farmers to modernize their practices. He shared the story of a farmer in Occidental Mindoro who faced a loss of his harvest due to outdated rice varieties.

“It’s hard to let go of what we’re used to, but we all know the climate is changing. Now, more than ever, we must embrace modern knowledge and technology in farming,” Villarama stressed.

More than a thousand farmers and students participated in the Lakbay Palay event, where they explored PhilRice’s experimental fields and learned about modern rice farming technologies and programs under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/25/da-pushes-irrigation-expansion-urban-farming-for-food-security/>

‘Stable oil, food prices spell continued inflation easing’

Samuel P. Medenilla
September 25, 2024

THE Department of Finance (DOF) expects the inflation rate to continue to cool down next year, citing the projected stable oil and food prices as well as continued economic growth in the coming months despite the upcoming Christmas season.

In a press briefing in Malacañang on Tuesday, DOF Secretary Ralph G. Recto said he is confident the inflation rate will ease to 2.5 percent this month from 3.3 percent in August.

Among the top inflation drivers last month for food were rice and pork, while for non-food items, those were restaurant services, rentals, and transport.

Recto said ongoing efforts by the Department of Agriculture (DA) to augment existing rice stockpile through importation and available pork supply by addressing the spread of the African Swine Fever (ASF) have ensured the country’s food security.

“We expect inflation to go down to 2.5 percent by September and the most important, we have sufficient rice and ham for Christmas,” he said.

“So, for the full year, we’re looking at the total inflation rate to be about 3.4 percent more or less,” he added.

In June, the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) announced the government is aiming for 3 percent to 4 percent inflation rate this year.

Headwinds

The DOF chief made the low inflation rate projection despite the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) reducing requirement ratios (RRR) of banks, which is expected to inject around P400 billion in liquidity in the financial system.

Recto said the adjustment will be good for the economy and help improve capital markets.

“So, not really, that’s all been considered and we expect inflation to be 2.9 to 3.1 percent next year. So, even lower than this year,” he added.

Energy-related factors, however, such as the spread of war in the Middle East—which in turn can lead to the spike in oil prices—and looming electricity rate hikes could derail their projectio, he said.

“Our biggest challenge really is external headwinds and one will be the war in the Middle East so we don’t want that to go out of hand; and possibly oil price increases which we have no control over,” Recto said.

As for the electricity rate, he said, the President decided to “spread that out to roughly 36 months” to minimize its impact to consumers.

At Tuesday’s sectoral meeting on managing food and non-food inflation, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. directed concerned government agencies to manage inflationary factors that may affect the price of rice, sugar and pork such as La Niña impacts, importation, food production, and ASF.

Returning confidence

DA Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel, Jr. reported that their efforts to contain the ASF are ongoing and includes the procurement of 600,000 doses of vaccines by end of December.

“The first 10,000 doses, the vaccination will be finished by the end of the month and the schedule for the award for the next 450,000 doses is October 10, of which we will take delivery of 150,000 doses by then,” Laurel said.

He said the ASF vaccines will give hog raisers the confidence to start investing in their farms again and help boost the country's pork supply.

The DA chief disclosed the local spread of ASF has reduced the country's hog population by half.

“Hopefully, everything will be implemented on schedule and hopefully next year, we will focus on repopulating and continue in raising and restoring the population of hogs to about 14 million heads; currently, there are 7.5 million hogs for now,” Laurel said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/25/stable-oil-food-prices-spell-continued-inflation-easing/>

₱8.3B from tariffs seen to aid farm production

Ada Pelonia
September 25, 2024

A lawmaker believes that a total of P8.3 billion in funds from tariffs can be used to enhance the competitiveness of local agricultural producers.

During plenary deliberations at the Lower House on the 2025 budget for the Department of Agriculture (DA), Bagong Henerasyon (BH) Partylist Rep. Bernadette Herrera said the balance of the Competitive Enhancement Measures Fund (CEMF) was around P4.5 billion while the Trade Remedies Fund (TRF) stood at P3.8 billion.

However, Herrera believes the P10 million allocation by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) for the TRF in 2025 isn't enough.

“Maybe it's possible to increase this P10 million [allocation]. The DA's Trade Remedies Unit is a critical policy-making body that deals with unfair trade practices,” said the solon in Filipino.

Republic Act 8800 (Safeguard Measures Act) defines the TRF as consisting of 50 percent of revenues collected from fees, charges and duties on imports. The funds are earmarked for the implementation of remedies, including safeguard measures.

The other half going to the CEMF would be used for competitiveness-enhancement measures for industries affected by the increased imports.

Government documents showed that the DA received a P10-million appropriation from TRF and P250 million appropriation from CEMF.

According to House Deputy Majority Leader Janette L. Garin, the designated sponsor of the DA's budget proposal, the department is facing bottlenecks regarding the "restrictive" nature of the CEMF's implementing guidelines.

The guidelines for the management and utilization of the funds were issued last February by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. through his Memorandum Circular 5.

Garin explained that under the guidelines, the grant would only apply to a specific sector affected by a certain imported commodity.

"Secretary [Laurel] has assured us that they will amend the guidelines [...] dahil nandiyan nga yung pera, pero konti ang proposals dahil medyo restricted ang mga nakakagamit," she said. "They gave a commitment of one month to amend this guideline. This will be in preparation for 2025."

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/25/%e2%82%b18-3b-from-tariffs-seen-to-aid-farm-production/>

HB 10840: A bold plan to transform PHL agriculture

BusinessMirror Editorial
September 25, 2024

Lawmakers who authored and pushed for the approval of House Bill (HB) 10840 noted that the average age of Filipino farmers is currently at 58. (*See, “Bill supporting young fishers and farmers hurdles House,” in the BusinessMirror, September 23, 2024.*) This means that half of the population of local farmers is above 58 years old or even senior citizens. The bill is cognizant of the fact that reducing the average age of Filipino farmers would require radical steps to entice the youth to join the agriculture sector.

HB 10840, which establishes the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Program, will attempt to put in place measures that will make the farming sector attractive again to young Filipinos. This is encapsulated in Section 2 of the bill, which says that the State will involve the youth in nation building and rural development, “providing for this purpose access to knowledge, information and education, land, new sources of financial services and capital, green jobs, new and niche markets, and participation in policy dialogue.” It mandates the creation of a council that will provide the overall policy and direction of concerned agencies to ensure the effective implementation of the program.

In formulating the program, the council is required to consult with research institutions, such as the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture, Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development, University of the Philippines-Los Baños and other relevant state universities and colleges. One of its functions is to serve as a conduit between stakeholders and national and international leaders including Congress and the private sector in formulating policies directly addressing the concerns of young farmers and fishers.

Its most important functions, however, are central to government efforts to increase the number of young people in the agriculture sector. The council,

according to HB 10840, should ease their access to credit including start-up capital. It is also mandated to facilitate short-term leases for public land to young farmers and develop mechanisms that will allow them to eventually own it.

The inability of their parents or grandparents to own land and their limited access to production capital made it more difficult for farming families to get out of poverty. Their parents or grandparents could not get out of debt because the lack of access to cheap credit forced them to turn to loan sharks. As they grappled with onerous interest rates, low farmgate prices, and losses due to natural disasters, not a few farmers discouraged their sons and daughters from going into farming.

HB 10840 has been transmitted to the Senate for its own deliberations and approval. While we await the measure's enactment and implementation, policymakers should provide the assistance needed by our farmers to improve their productivity and their income. A program supporting young farmers and fishers will not be enough to induce them to join the agriculture sector if their parents will remain poor.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/25/hb-10840-a-bold-plan-to-transform-phl-agriculture/>

ABANTE TONITE

BBM pinapaapura bakuna kontra ASF

September 24, 2024

Inatasan ni Pangulong Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ Marcos Jr. si Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na bilisan ang ang roll-out ng African Swine Fever vaccines upang mapigilan ang mas malawakang pagkalat ng sakit sa mga baboy.

Sa ipinatawag na sectoral meeting sa Malacañang, sinabi ng Pangulo na ang ASF ang nananatiling mala-king hamon sa ginagawang pagsisikap ng gobyerno na mapabagal ang inflation sa pagkain.

Sinabi naman ni Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. sa press briefing sa Malacañang na matatapos na sa katapusan ng buwan ang 10,000 doses ng bakuna at makukumpleto ang pagbili ng dagdag na 600,000 na ASF vaccines sa Disyembre.

“The schedule for the award for the next 450,000 doses this October 10 of which we will take delivery of 150,000 doses by then,” ani Laurel. (Aileen Taliping)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/09/24/bbm-pinapaapura-bakuna-kontra-asf/>

REMATE:

PBBM, kumpiyansa sa pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas

September 24, 2024 18:32



KUMPIYANSA si Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. na mas mababawasan ang presyo ng bigas sa bansa.

“Doon sa rice mukha namang sumusunod doon sa projections natin sa rice prices. And it seems to be consistent again with the same experience of other ASEAN countries like Thailand and Vietnam,” ayon kay Pangulong Marcos sa idinaos na sectoral meeting sa Palasyo ng Malakanyang, araw ng Martes.

“So, I think as the time goes on, that should improve,” aniya pa rin.

Sinabi naman ng Presidential Communications Office (PCO) na bigas ang itinuturing na top inflation driver, nakapag-ambag ng 1.3% na puntos sa inflation.

“Inflation further decelerated to 14.7 percent, but prices remained elevated,” ayon sa PCO.

Ang mga presyo ng bigas sa Vietnam at Thailand ay naging moderate noong nakaraang buwan, nakasaad sa available data para sa buwan ng September ang pagbabago sa presyo ng kalakal.

Matatandaang, ang campaign promise ni Pangulong Marcos ay ibaba ang presyo ng bigas sa P20 kada kilo.

“The aspiration hinges on fixing the value chain, or the series of stages involved in producing a product or service that is sold to consumers, with each state adding to the value of the product or services.” ang sinabi ng Chief Executive.

Samantala, sa press briefing sa Malakanyang, sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel na may pagtataya ang DA ng paggaan ng presyo ng bigas, ang ganap na epekto nito ay dapat na maramdaman sa Enero 2025.

”So, we should see a lowering of—because of the lower duties, at saka bumaba rin ng kaunti ang international price ng bigas, so pababa na iyan. But the full effects, para sa akin, ₱5.00 to ₱7.00 ang range, so, I will put it at ₱5.00 na dapat bumaba,” ang sinabi ni Laurel.

”Kung ₱52 kunwari ngayon ang bigas, dapat by January ay nasa ₱48 na lang iyan; kung ₱50 ang bigas ngayon, ₱45 dapat iyan by January. Iyan ang aking estimates,” dagdag na wika nito. **Kris Jose**

<https://remate.ph/pbbm-kumpiyansa-sa-pagbaba-ng-presyo-ng-bigas/>

REMATE:

600K ASF vax bibilhin ng DA ‘gang Disyembre

September 24, 2024 18:45



MANILA, Philippines – UMAASA si Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel na makokompleto ng gobyerno na makakuha ng 600,000 doses ng African swine fever (ASF) vaccine ngayong Disyembre ng taong kasalukuyan.

”As far as ASF is concerned, the first 10,000 doses will be finished... the vaccination will be finished by the end of the month, the schedule for the award of the next 450,000 doses this October 10 of which we will take delivery of 150,000 doses by then,” ang sinabi ni Laurel sa press briefing sa Malakanyang.

”We hope to complete the procurement of 600,000 doses by end of December this year,” dagdag na wika nito.

Buwan ng Agosto nang simula ng pamahalaan ang tinatawag na ‘controlled trial’ ng Vietnam-made ASF vaccine bilang bahagi ng pagsisikap nito na labanan ang pagkalat ng nasabing sakit.

Sinabi ng mga awtoridad na kasama sa ASF vaccination ay ang pagbabakuna sa mga malulusog na baboy para pigilan ang paglaganap ng sakit, na nakaapekto sa local hog sector simula nang matuklasan ito noong 2019.

Samantala, P350 million ang inilaan ng Department of Agriculture para makakuha ng 600,000 doses ng ASF vaccine para sa trial.

Ang pagbabakuna ay gagawin sa pamamagitan ng ‘voluntary basis’ at prayoridad dito ang maliliit na hog raisers sa mga lugar na mayroong mataas na kaso ng ASF.

Nauna rito, sinabi ni Laurel na mahalaga ang pagkakatuklas sa tamang bakuna laban sa ASF “to saving billions of investments, revitalizing backyard farms, and ensuring food security in the country.” *Kris Jose*

<https://remate.ph/600k-asf-vax-bibilhin-ng-da-gang-disyembre/>

REMATE:

Kaso vs rice importers na may overstaying containers sa Manila port, pag-aaralan ng DA

September 24, 2024 09:09



MANILA, Philippines – SISIYASATIN ng Department of Agriculture (DA) kung mahaharap sa legal liability ang rice importers para sa container vans ng mga imported na bigas na natuklasan na “nag-overstay” sa Manila International Container Terminal (MICT) ng ilang linggo.

Kamakailan, kinumpirma ng Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) na may 888 shipping containers, may karga na 20 million kilograms ng bigas, ang kasalukuyang nakaimbak sa container yards ng Manila ports.

Nauna rito, nanawagan si Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel sa PPA na bilisan ang pagkilos sa libong container vans na naglalaman ng 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,” ayon kay Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa, tagapagsalita ng DA.

Aniya, natukoy na ng agriculture department ang consignee ng imported rice.

“So, part ito ng pag-review namin ngayon. So, we will let you know,” aniya pa rin.

Sa kabilang dako, sinabi naman ni PPA General Manager Jay Daniel Santiago na 300 containers ng naturang 888 shipping containers ang Inalis na ng kani-kanilang 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,” ang sinabi pa ni De Mesa.

“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,” ang winika pa rin nito.

<https://remate.ph/kaso-vs-rice-importers-na-may-overstaying-containers-sa-manila-port-pag-aaralan-ng-da/>

ABANTE:

Murang bigas sa Enero pa matitikman

Abante News

- September 24, 2024



Sa Enero 2025 pa mararamdaman ng publiko ang pinakahihintay na mababang presyo ng bigas bilang resulta ng pagtapyas ng taripa sa mga imported rice.

Ito ang inihayag sa press briefing sa Malacañang ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. sa harap ng patuloy na pagbabantay ng publiko sa pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas.

Ayon kay Laurel, sa kalagitnaan ng Oktubre ay bahagyang nararamdaman na ang epekto subalit ganap na mararamdaman ito sa unang buwan ng 2025.

Sa ngayon, ayon sa kalihim, ay paubos na ang supply sa nabiling mahal na imported na bigas gayundin ang nabiling lokal na palay na nabili rin sa mataas na presyo at sa sandaling maubos ang

supply hanggang Nobyembre, saka pa lamang mararamdaman ang unti-unting pagbaba sa presyo ng bigas.

Batay sa pagtaya ng kaihim, pitong piso hanggang limang piso ang mababawas sa presyo kada kilo o mula P52 kada kilo at pagsapit ng Enero ay magiging P48 na.

Para naman kay Finance Secretary Ralph Recto, tinatayang anim na piso ang ibababa pero depende pa rin ito sa presyo ng imported rice at sa presyuhan sa pandaigdigang pamilihan. (Aileen Taliping)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/09/24/murang-bigas-sa-enero-pa-matitikman/>