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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# DBM asked to release ₱9 billion for palay procurement—DA chief

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

Sep 26, 2024 04:21 PM



The National Food Authority (NFA) has asked the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to release the ₱9 billion fund for “palay (unmilled rice) procurement this year, Department of Agriculture (DA) said.

The release of the funds, according to NFA Administrator Larry Lacson, will boost DA’s war chest to about ₱11 billion, helping achieve a procurement goal of between 6.4 million to 8.7 million bags of palay before the end of the year.

"The NFA asked the Department of Budget and Management to release the funds for palay procurement so we could support farmers and stabilize prices during the harvest this wet season," DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

The agriculture department said the NFA has utilized a leftover budget of ₱8.7 billion from 2023 to purchase palay from farmers earlier this year. In the first half, the NFA allocated ₱5.3 billion for the acquisition of 3.5 million bags of palay.

Meanwhile, Laurel, who chairs the NFA Council, assured farmers that the agency will buy palay between ₱21 and ₱23 per kilo.

The DA chief noted that maintaining the buying price at a minimum of ₱21 per kilo could help tackle reports of traders purchasing palay in Nueva Ecija for P16 to ₱17 per kilo.

Farmers' group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) has earlier reported that local farmers are now complaining about the ₱4 to ₱5 per kilo decrease in the farmgate price of palay.

Jayson Cainglet, the executive director of SINAG, said what they are worried about is the big drop in farmgate price of palay during the 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)),” he said.

As of Sept. 25, the NFA has procured a total of four million bags of palay.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/26/dbm-asked-to-release-9-billion-for-palay>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **DILG tells LGUs: Address animal cruelty cases under the 'Animal Welfare Act'**

**BY [CHITO CHAVEZ](#)**

Sep 26, 2024 12:14 PM



The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) issued a memorandum circular that encourages the local government units (LGUs) nationwide to implement the “Animal Welfare Act of 1998” for the care and welfare of the animals in their communities.

DILG Secretary Benjamin “Benhur” Abalos Jr. explained that the purpose of Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 2024-126 is to encourage the LGUs to establish and manage animal pounds and all other facilities that may be utilized for “the breeding, keeping, care, treatment or training of all animals as objects of trade or as livestock. pet in the house.”

“Republic Act No. 8485 (The Animal Welfare Act of 1998) was enacted into law for the purpose of protecting and promoting the welfare of all animals in the country, by supervising and regulating the establishment and operations of all facilities utilized for breeding, maintaining, keeping, treating or training of all animals either as objects of trade, or as household pets to

include birds,” the DILG noted.

“Animal welfare linked to other sustainability issues such as food security, human health, and environmental pressure on ecosystems, has its compelling need for a change of human perspective and mindset to position animals for humane treatment. This important dimension of sustainable development needs to be considered, requiring the upholding of standards indispensable in achieving desired sustainable gains,” it added.

With these considerations, the DILG, consistent with its mandate of providing assistance in the implementation of the law, has issued enabling policies and joint issuances with the Department of Agriculture (DA) that covers the registration of all animal facilities; regulations on the welfare of animals during rearing, raising animals for food or animal husbandry; care of animals during

transport and slaughter; responsible pet ownership; care of animals in pounds and use of euthanasia for population control and such prohibitions on dog meat trade and animal fighting for the protection and welfare of animals.

Despite the issuance of the MC, Abalos said that the DILG received reports on cases of animal cruelty that need to be properly addressed requiring the reiteration and consolidation of set guidelines and standards, and strengthening further, LGU structures to enable them to effectively carry-out their mandated tasks.

“This memorandum circular is issued to encourage local government units to implement all program components of the animal welfare law, particularly in the establishment and management of animal pound, and all other facilities established and utilized for breeding, maintaining, keeping, treating or training of all animals either as objects of trade or as household pets,” Abalos noted.

He added that the policy also covers the care and welfare of animals in captivity or in the wild, companion animals, work animals, and animals used for entertainment and scientific research.

Under the MC, Abalos stated that all barangays are mandated to designate a barangay animal welfare, who will coordinate with the city and/or municipal designated animal welfare enforcement Officer/office, as the case may be, on matters concerning barangay animal welfare activities.

The DILG chief pointed out that the animal welfare enforcement by the local government units shall be in coordination with the concerned Department of Agriculture-Regional Field Office (DA-RFO) through their deputized Animal Welfare Enforcement Officers (AWEOs).

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/26/dilg-tells-lg-us-address-animal-cruelty-cases-under-the-animal-welfare-act>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# ‘Agri-cool-ture’: Yamsuan eyes ‘cool’ endeavors to attract youth to food security initiatives

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Sep 26, 2024 06:29 PM

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## AT A GLANCE

- Bicol Saro Party-list Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan is proposing a “cool” approach to effectively raise awareness about food security initiatives while also encouraging youth participation.



Bicol Saro Party-list Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan (Yamsuan's Facebook)

Bicol Saro Party-list Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan is proposing a “cool” approach to effectively raise awareness about food security initiatives while also encouraging youth participation. During the 2024 Sustainable Agriculture Forum on Thursday morning, Sept. 26, Yamsuan underscored that both present and future generations must work together to create a “brighter, greener, and bluer future” for farmers, fisherfolk, and the rest of the planet. One way to realize this goal, he said, was to package agriculture and related industries as “cool” endeavors to make people pay attention and take part in them.



“Instead of saying agriculture, I would say agri-cool-ture,” said Yamsuan.

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“We have to make agriculture cool. When something is cool—people pay attention, people care, people want to take part in it,” he added.

The rookie lawmaker insisted that initiatives aimed at food security will not be effective if people lack awareness about its importance.

With this in mind, he said “cool” initiatives may include tapping the power of social media to better inform the public about agriculture and fisheries.

Yamsuan noted that these industries were usually branded as mere tedious tasks, such as in the form of planting and fishing. However, he explained that agriculture and fisheries can also be profitable industries using digital tools.

“By making agriculture, and relevant industries such as fisheries and aquaculture, cool, we can raise awareness of their importance, and crucially, attract the attention of the youth—the future stewards of these sectors. Without their participation, sustainable agri-futures may be a distant goal,” he emphasized.

As chairman of the House Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources, Yamsuan also presented in the forum the several legislative accomplishments of Congress that seek to strengthen agriculture and related industries.

He said the House of Representatives has committed to realizing a vision of sustainable, inclusive, and resilient agriculture and fisheries sectors.

“By working together, let us shape agri-futures that nourish livelihoods, stimulate innovation, and safeguard the well-being of current and future generations,” he added.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/26/agri-cool-ture-yamsuan-eyes-cool-endeavors-to-attract-youth-in-food-security-initiatives>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Marcos signs Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act

BY [ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS](#)

Sep 26, 2024 04:03 PM

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## AT A GLANCE

- The new law repeals RA No. 10845 or the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016, replacing it with more comprehensive mechanisms to ensure stricter enforcement and better implementation.

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"This is not just another policy, it is your battle cry."

President Marcos said this as he assured local farmers and fisherfolk of the government's stronger resolve in protecting and uplifting their lives through the newly signed Republic Act (RA) No. 12022 or the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act which aims to dismantle illegal activities that disrupt food supply and inflate prices.



**PROTECTING LOCAL PRODCUERS** — President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. presents the newly signed copy of Republic Act (RA) No. 12022 or the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act in a ceremony in Malacañan, Sept. 26, 2024. (RTVM Screenshot)

In his speech during the ceremonial signing in Malacañan, the President said that everyone involved in the smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, and other cartel activities involving agricultural products will be held liable.

"Let me be clear: this law does not just target the masterminds. It holds all accomplices accountable— financiers, brokers, employees, even transporters," he said on Thursday, Sept. 26.

"We will enforce the law and ensure that swift and decisive action is taken against anyone who dares to sabotage our agricultural sector," he added.

To Marcos, this new law is important after noting that the country lost over P3 billion to agricultural smuggling. He added that P213 million worth of smuggled agricultural products were seized by the government in just nine months this year.

"The passage of the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act will set in motion transformative outcomes," he said.

"It is a proactive measure to prevent the entry of smuggled agricultural products, ensuring that the correct duties and taxes are paid while imposing higher penalties on violators," he added.

According to the President, the new law shapes a stronger and more resilient agricultural sector that defends farmers and consumers as it safeguards public health by preventing the consumption or industrial processing of agricultural products that lack the necessary sanitary and phytosanitary permits.

"It ensures that what ends up on the tables of every Filipino family is safe and of the highest quality," he said.

"By eliminating smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, and other cartel activities, we are not only shielding our local producers but also providing consumers with affordable agricultural and fishery products," he added.

Under RA 12022, smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, and cartel operations involved in agricultural and fishery products will now be classified as economic sabotage—a non-bailable offense punishable by life imprisonment and fines up to five times the value of the goods involved.

It likewise establishes the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council and Enforcement Group which Marcos will chair. The Secretaries of Agriculture (DA), Finance (DOF), Transportation (DOTr), Trade and Industry (DTI), Interior and Local Government (DILG), and Justice (DOJ) will serve as Council members as well as the heads of the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) and the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC). The Council is tasked to ensure the proper implementation of the Act, coordinate investigations, and conduct visits and inspections to enforce compliance with the law.

The Enforcement Group, on the other hand, is composed of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI); the Philippine National Police (PNP); the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), and the DOF.

The law also creates the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Enforcement Group dedicated to dismantling smuggling operations and apprehending offenders.

Meanwhile, President Marcos assured farmers and fishers of a faster resolution of cases related to agricultural sabotage as the law provides for developing a special team of prosecutors nationwide to expedite such cases.

"No longer will these cases gather dust. They will be prioritized and they will be resolved urgently," he said.

"We will confront and dismantle the powerful forces that have long exploited our system for their own gain, ensuring that justice prevails and the dignity of our agri sector is upheld. No more backdoors, no more shortcuts, and, certainly, no more turning a blind eye in Bagong Pilipinas," he added.

The new law repeals RA No. 10845 or the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016, replacing it with more comprehensive mechanisms to ensure stricter enforcement and better implementation.

Ultimately, it aligns with the Administration's broader commitment to achieving food security and supporting the agricultural sector which remains a vital pillar of the Philippine economy.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/26/marcos-anti-agricultural-economic-sabotage>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Marcos signs Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act into law

[Jean Mangaluz](#) - Philstar.com

September 26, 2024 | 4:51pm



President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday, September 26, signs into law the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act.

Screencap / RTV Malacanang

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday, September 26, signed into law a measure imposing stiffer penalties for agricultural smuggling.

The Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act is one of this administration’s priority legislations. The Senate ratified the bicameral report on the measure in August, mending disagreeing provisions between the two chambers of Congress.

“Today, we come together, not merely to protect but to uplift the very hands that cultivate our fields and fish our waters as we embark on the pivotal journey of enacting the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act,” Marcos said in his speech in Malacañan Palace.

The new law effectively repealed the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016, replacing it with a law that clearly defined crimes related to agricultural economic sabotage, which includes smuggling, hoarding, profiteering and cartel operations.

“A non-bailable offense punishable by life imprisonment, and fines up to five times the value of the goods involved,” Marcos said.

The law creates the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Enforcement Group, which would create a special team of prosecutors that will take these cases to court.

Marcos believed that these crimes not only negatively impact the economy, but it also affects national security, citing threats to livelihood and food price stability.

“To those who seek to sow chaos in the fertile fields and waters that sustain us, the hand of justice will swiftly and decisively find you,” Marcos said.

Marcos’ term has seen sky-high food prices, which have largely been attributed to smuggling and inflation.

“Every sack of smuggled rice, every under the table onion deal, every substandard meat sneaking past our quarantine checks. These are not just numbers, they represent lives, families, and futures that are being compromised,” Marcos said.

During the ceremonial signing, Marcos was joined by House Speaker Martin Romualdez, Senate President Francis Escudero, Sen. Cynthia Villar who is the principal author of the measure, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and more.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/09/26/2388164/marcos-signs-anti-agricultural-economic-sabotage-act-law>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Marcos Jr. signs anti-agriculture economic sabotage law

[Alexis Romero](#) - The Philippine Star

September 27, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Stiffer penalties await those who smuggle agricultural products as President Marcos yesterday signed into law a measure declaring the act as economic sabotage, a crime he described as a “betrayal” and a threat to the economy and national security.

Republic Act 12022 or the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act seeks to protect farmers, fisherfolk and consumers by defining and penalizing crimes related to agricultural economic sabotage like smuggling, hoarding, profiteering and cartel activities.

It establishes a daily price index, introduces registration requirements for businesses dealing with agricultural goods and establishes an Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council led by the President.

“Economic sabotage in agriculture is not simply a tale of dubious deals and inflated profits; it manifests as well as hunger, desperation, betrayal,” Marcos said during the signing ceremony.

“Let us then acknowledge the gravity of the situation: these crimes threaten not only our economy but our national security as well. It jeopardizes the livelihood of hardworking Filipino farmers and fisherfolk and it threatens the food sustainability of our communities,” he added.

According to Marcos, the Philippines lost a “staggering” amount of more than P3 billion to agricultural smuggling in 2023 alone. In less than nine months this year, authorities seized over P230 million worth of smuggled agricultural products.

“Every sack of smuggled rice, every under-the-table onion deal, every substandard meat sneaking past our quarantine checks – these are not just numbers; they represent lives, families and futures that are being compromised,” the Chief Executive said.

He also called on cartels that “manipulate the prices and control supplies,” saying the signing of the new law “will set in motion transformative outcomes.”

The newly enacted law repeals RA 10845 or the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016.

One of the priority measures of the administration, the law covers rice, corn, beef and other ruminants, pork, poultry, garlic, onion, carrots, other vegetables, fruits, fish, salt and other aquatic products in their raw state or which have undergone the simple process of preparation or preservation for the market within the primary and post-harvest stages of the food supply chain, palm oil, palm olein, raw and refined sugar and tobacco.

Under the law, a daily price index will monitor and publish prevailing retail prices of agricultural and fishery products in all regions to ensure transparency and accountability.

Marcos noted that smuggling, hoarding, profiteering and cartel operations involving agricultural and fishery products would be classified as economic sabotage – a non-bailable offense punishable by life imprisonment and fines up to five times the value of the goods involved.

“And let me be clear: this law does not just target the masterminds; it holds all accomplices accountable – financiers, brokers, employees, even transporters,” the President said.

The Court of Tax Appeals shall have exclusive jurisdiction for cases related to agricultural economic sabotage and shall have the authority to handle and decide on criminal proceedings under the law.

The Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council and Enforcement Group will be formed to ensure the proper implementation of the law, coordinate investigations and conduct visits and inspections to enforce compliance with the measure.

The Council will consist of the President or his designated permanent representative as chair and the chiefs of the Agriculture, Justice, Finance, Interior and Local Government, Transportation and Trade and Industry departments, the Anti-Money Laundering Council and Philippine Competition Commission as members.

The enforcement group, meanwhile, will be composed of the National Bureau of Investigation, Philippine National Police, Philippine Coast Guard and Department of Finance.



“This law provides for the development of a special team of prosecutors nationwide to expedite cases related to agricultural sabotage. No longer will these cases gather dust; they will be prioritized and they will be resolved urgently,” Marcos said.

Marcos urged the public to be vigilant, to report wrongdoing and to hold accountable “those who seek to undermine our nation.”?

## **NFA: Enough rice stocks**

National Food Authority Administrator Larry Lacson yesterday said the agency has enough rice stocks that can be tapped during calamities as the total NFA inventory reached 157,000 metric tons or 3.1 million bags of rice.

“We can use these stocks in case of an emergency. We are safe in terms of volume (of rice) in the entire Philippines,” Lacson said.

He added that the total rice stock can feed the entire population for five days.

According to Lacson, the NFA has at least 288 warehouses nationwide but only 245 are operational as the rest need repair.

The NFA official also confirmed a drop in the farmgate price of palay amid the impact of recent rains.

“Based on our monitoring because of the recent rains, traders brought down their buying price between P16 and P17 per kilo,” Lacson added.

The NFA is currently buying palay from the farmers between P21 and P23 per kilo, according to the NFA official.

“Many farmers were happy because of our buying price. They were able to earn in the last harvest,” he said.

The NFA has an existing arrangement with the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Irrigation Administration regional offices for the use of trucks to transport the palay of farmers to the agency.

“If the traders learn that we will get the palay of farmers in the fields, they do not lower their buying price too much,” Lacson said.

He said the NFA is also providing drying facilities to farmers for free.

“They can dry their palay and after that, they can immediately sell their produce directly to NFA,” he added.

He also hopes that the NFA will again sell rice in the markets once Congress approves the amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law, allowing the agency to sell the staple anew.

## **Abandoned imported rice**

The DA reported that two of the 888 shipping container of imported rice at the Port of Manila are considered abandoned after being left unclaimed for more than 30 days.

In a radio interview, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said that one shipping container has been sitting for 275 days at the Manila Port while the other container has been there for 160 days.

“Based on the rule of the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), if the container van is unclaimed for more than 30 days, it is already considered abandoned,” De Mesa said.

He added that each container van contains at least 540 bags of imported rice.

“The Bureau of Plant Industry will check the quality of rice as we are concerned about food safety,” De Mesa added.

According to De Mesa, the PPA should have informed the DA of the unclaimed rice shipments.

“Under the Rice Tariffication Law, the National Food Authority lost its mandate to inspect warehouses, including the container vans at the piers,” De Mesa noted.

He said that based on PPA’s report, half of the 888 shipping container were already released after being claimed by the importers.

He warned importers that they may face possible charges of hoarding if they leave their imports for a longer time, adding that there should be timing in the importation and distribution of imported rice to prevent problems in the food value chain.

Officials of the House of Representatives also appealed to importers to claim their shipments of imported rice that remain at the Port of Manila.

Speaker Martin Romualdez “urged rice importers to expedite the release of tax-paid shipments and promptly pull out their shipments,” according to a statement from the Bureau of Customs yesterday.

Romualdez said the consignees should also “refrain from illegal hoarding activities lest they face the full force of the law.”

He also said to immediately pull out the stalled rice shipments to “ensure adequate rice supply and avoid potential price hikes.”

## **P5 billion additional profits**

Rice traders and importers pocketed over P5 billion in additional profits since the government cut the tariff on the staple to 15 percent, a farmers’ group claimed yesterday.

The Federation of Free Farmers estimated that the rice importers saved P5 billion in tariff payments since Executive Order 62 took effect last July.

These savings, the group argued, were not passed on for the benefit of the consumers, citing the minuscule drop in retail rice prices.

“Since then, official data from the Philippine Statistics Authority show that retail prices of both regular and well milled rice declined by only P0.40 per kilo,” the group said yesterday. – **Bella Cariaso, Ghio Ong, Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/09/27/2388234/marcos-jr-signs-anti-agriculture-economic-sabotage-law>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# US, Australia seek clarification on Philippines first border facility rules

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#) - The Philippine Star

September 27, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The US and Australia will question at a World Trade Organization (WTO) committee if the forthcoming operationalization of the Philippines' first border will impede the flow of imported goods that have been inspected by competent authorities.

The two developed countries have tabled five questions for the two-day meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture (CoA) that started Wednesday regarding the Philippines' Cold Examination Facility for Agriculture (CEFA) project.

The US and Australia are inquiring regarding the status of the guidelines or regulations governing the implementation of CEFA, particularly for the inspection and testing of agricultural goods.

The two countries are seeking clarification on whether the rules have been finalized and if the Philippines will operationalize the CEFA even without the notification of necessary guidelines to its trade partners.

The two countries cited media reports that the DA would soon utilize a CEFA as late as this year or early 2025. They noted that the Philippines answered in a WTO CoA meeting last year that the guidelines for the inspection and testing of imported agricultural products once CEFA becomes online are yet to be finalized.

The two countries are also concerned if the changes in the inspection regime would be notified to the WTO to allow its trade partners to provide comments on the new regulations.

Furthermore, they expressed caution that the new inspection rules of the country may "unduly" impede the movement of imported agricultural products.

"What steps are the Philippines taking to ensure that imports that have already been inspected, certified by the competent authority at the point of origin, and cleared by the

Philippine customs and quarantine officials at the port of entry will not be unduly impeded or undergo a second border inspection at the CEFAs?” they said.

Earlier this year, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said three CEFAs – located in the ports of Manila, Subic in Clark and General Santos in Mindanao- could come online by September next year.

The CEFA, considered as the country’s first border facility, is being touted by the government as a state-of-the-art examination facility capable of scrutinizing all imported agricultural commodities.

The facility is part of the government’s efforts to curb smuggling and strengthen the state’s capacity against animal diseases and pests.

The facilities would also allow various food safety regulatory agencies to conduct mandatory inspections of imported farm products pursuant to their mandates under the Food Safety Act of 2013.

In a related development, other WTO member-countries have lodged questions at the WTO CoA meeting about the implementation of the minimum access volume (MAV) system on pork imports by the Philippines.

The US and Canada are asking for a “detailed” explanation from the Philippine government regarding the dates and quantities of its pork MAV allocations for the year.

The STAR earlier reported that the Department of Agriculture (DA) made moves to limit the importation of pork under the country’s MAV mechanism by rationalizing the import quota allocation and releasing it in tranches contrary to previous rules.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/09/27/2388195/us-australia-seek-clarification-philippines-first-border-facility-rules>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# DA plans to create P5 billion buffer fund

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#) - The Philippine Star

September 27, 2024 | 12:00am



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the budget has been approved in principle by President Marcos, with possible funding sources already identified.

Jesse Bustos+

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) may start implementing a P5-billion buffer fund next year that will allow it to stockpile basic commodities, such as rice and meat, and sell these at more affordable prices during extreme situations such as supply shortages and price manipulation in the market.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the budget has been approved in principle by President Marcos, with possible funding sources already identified.

Tiu Laurel said he cannot yet disclose the funding source, but he emphasized that there are currently “several” options on the table.

“But for next year, we are almost sure that we can get that P5 billion buffer fund or fund to be able to use in case we have to trigger the price action,” he said.

The agriculture chief emphasized that the buffer fund is critical in ensuring stable prices of goods in the market. He said the mechanism has been legally existing since 1992 but has not been operationalized.

The buffer fund was created through Republic Act 7581 or the Price Act to serve as a mechanism for the government to intervene in the market in times of shortages and when prevailing market prices have been unreasonably high due to various factors such as calamities and illegal manipulation.

The DA issued Department Circular 7 earlier this year, which outlined the implementing rules of the buffer fund pursuant to Section 9 of the Price Act.

In the circular, Tiu Laurel said it is the concern of the state to protect consumers against hoarding, profiteering and cartels of primary goods during times of calamity, emergency, illegal price manipulation and similar situations.

Under the rules, the DA shall allocate a buffer fund in its annual appropriation subject to the evaluation of the Department of Budget and Management.

The amount of funds should be ample enough to allow the DA to protect consumers from shortage of supply or be able to influence prevailing market prices during extreme situations such as calamities and price manipulation, according to the DA.

The basic necessities and prime commodities bought and stored using the buffer fund will be sold by the government at a reasonable price in areas where there is a shortage of supply to temper prevailing market prices, based on the circular.

The sale of the commodities will be determined by the agriculture secretary upon the recommendation of the concerned local price coordinating council.

The sale of commodities bought through the buffer fund would be channeled through authorized government agencies and private entities such as retail outlets, cooperatives, consumer group-led outlets and Kadiwa stores.

The proceeds from the sale of the commodities will be remitted to the national treasury as income of the general fund, according to the DA.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/09/27/2388214/da-plans-create-p5-billion-buffer-fund>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# NEDA pushes anew for approval of Konektadong Pinoy bill

[Louella Desiderio](#) - The Philippine Star

September 27, 2024 | 12:00am



In a statement yesterday, the NEDA said it made a renewed call for the expedited passage of the Konektadong Pinoy bill or the Open Access in Data Transmission bill during the sixth Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) last Wednesday.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) is pushing for the immediate approval of the bill that seeks to enable the delivery of reliable and affordable internet services for all Filipinos.

In a statement yesterday, the NEDA said it made a renewed call for the expedited passage of the Konektadong Pinoy bill or the Open Access in Data Transmission bill during the sixth Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) last Wednesday.

“The Konektadong Pinoy bill is crucial to the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028, as it will usher advancements across various sectors, including ICT (information



communications technology), education, health and agriculture,” NEDA Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said.

Composed of representatives from the Senate, the House of Representatives and the Cabinet, the LEDAC chaired by President Marcos sets the government’s legislative priorities, with NEDA acting as the council’s secretariat.

The LEDAC has previously identified the Konektadong Pinoy bill as a priority for passage before the end of the current or the 19th Congress.

The bill has been approved on third and final reading by the House of Representatives and is currently awaiting plenary deliberation in the Senate.

Senate Bill 2699 or the Konektadong Pinoy bill aims to upgrade both physical and digital infrastructure, as well as facilitate the participation of individuals and businesses in the digital economy through access to affordable internet service.

During the meeting, Senate President Francis Escudero and House Speaker Martin Romualdez provided updates on the status of priority bills.

Since the fifth LEDAC meeting held on June 25, two of the 28 priority bills such as the New Government Procurement Act and the Anti-Financial Accounts Scamming Act have been signed into law by the President.

Meanwhile, two other measures approved by Congress such as the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act and the VAT (value-added tax) on Digital Services bill await the President’s signature.

Those in line for approval of the President are the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program Act, Self-Reliant Defense Posture Revitalization Act, Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises to Maximize Opportunities for Reinvigorating the Economy or CREATE MORE Act, Philippine Maritime Zones Act, Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act and the Enterprise-Based Education and Training Framework Act.

The remaining priority bills targeted for approval within the current Congress are the Blue Economy Act, Amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law, Amendments to the Universal Health Care Act, Amendments to the Right-of-Way Act, Rationalization of the Mining Fiscal Regime, E-Government Act / E-Governance Act, Department of Water Resources, Amendments to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act, Mandatory Reserve Officers’ Training Corps Act, Unified System of Separation, Retirement and Pension of Military and Uniformed Personnel, Waste-to-Energy bill, Amendments to

the Agrarian Reform Law, Reforms to Philippine Capital Markets, Excise Tax on Single-Use Plastics, Amendments to the Foreign Investors' Long-Term Lease Act, New Government Auditing Code and the Philippine Immigration Act.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/09/27/2388199/neda-pushes-anew-approval-konektadong-pinoy-bill>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# EDITORIAL - Agricultural economic sabotage

The Philippine Star

September 27, 2024 | 12:00am



For many years now, shortages and price spikes of rice, sugar and other agricultural commodities have been blamed on cartels, hoarders and smugglers. Certain persons such as the so-called Sibuyas or Onion Queen have been identified and grilled in congressional investigations. Yet how many people and their alleged coddlers in government have actually been prosecuted and penalized for agriculture-related offenses?

Perhaps the enactment of Republic Act 12022 would lead to this, and serve as a deterrent to supply and price manipulation in the agriculture sector. President Marcos signed yesterday RA 12022, the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, which seeks to protect not only consumers but also farmers and fisherfolk from unscrupulous practices in agriculture. The law repeals RA 10845 passed in 2016.

Under the new law, smuggling, hoarding, profiteering and cartel operations involving agriculture and fishery products would be classified as economic sabotage – a non-bailable offense that would warrant life in prison and fines of up to five times the value of the goods involved. Also accountable under the law are brokers, employees, financiers and transporters of the principal players.

The intent is noble and the stiffer penalties should serve as a deterrent – if the law can be properly enforced. The first year of the Marcos administration was marked by the onion crisis, sugar price surge, shortages of roaster chickens and potatoes for French fries, plus price spikes in rice that fueled inflation. Supply and price manipulators were blamed, along with collusion by crooks in government and certain well-connected traders.

Even when a high-profile crackdown featured raids on warehouses housing agricultural commodities, however, the owners maintained that they were simply pursuing sound business practices based on regular market forces and regulating the release of their products for sale. Consignees of smuggled items could not be traced. Officials suspected of collusion in unscrupulous practices were not indicted.

The President said that in 2023 alone, the country lost a “staggering” P3 billion to agricultural smuggling. Since the start of this year, authorities have seized over P230 million worth of smuggled agricultural products, he said. The cartels, he added, “are operating right under our noses.”

“Today marks a turning point,” the President said as he vowed that RA 12022 “will set in motion transformative outcomes.” He will be held to his word.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/09/27/2388222/editorial-agricultural-economic-sabotage>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Meet 3 women farmers championing organic agriculture in the Philippines

Philstar.com

September 26, 2024 | 3:00pm

BrandSpace for NATURLAND



Concepcion Sotero, Maria Liza Evangelista and Dom-an Macagne

MANILA, Philippines — While agriculture remains a male-dominated sector in the Philippines, women farmers are gradually hitting the mainstream spotlight. And yes, these are not just farmers. They are impassioned advocates who till the land to create models of agroecological projects, proving that organic agriculture is the way forward.

As a key global advocate for organic farming, including in the Philippines, Naturland proudly highlights the stories of three inspiring women farmers from the Philippines. These women have partnered with Naturland through a project co-funded by [Misereor](#), aimed at leveraging organic agriculture as a vital tool to enhance the livelihoods of rural communities in the Philippines and beyond.

## 1. Maria Liza Evangelista, owner of La Granja de Jas Family Farm



Maria Liza Evangelista, the Vice Mayor of Sibagat, Agusan del Sur, is a powerful advocate for organic farming.

During her tenure as mayor, she began transforming her municipality into a hub of organic agriculture. Her own La Granja de Jas Family Farm, established during the pandemic, now serves as a model organic farm and a learning site.

Beyond just a personal endeavor, Maria Liza has partnered with Naturland to extend her advocacy, proving that organic agriculture can provide safe, healthy food for communities, while promoting environmental stewardship. "My mission is rooted in sustainability, leadership by example, and being a catalyst for change in my municipality," she shared.



## 2. Concepcion Sotero, TOFPAC Cooperative



Concepcion Sotero is a dedicated member of the TOFPAC Cooperative in Tublay, Benguet—one of Naturland's pilot partners.

Through this partnership, Naturland has empowered the cooperative by enhancing organic farming standards, improving access to financial resources, and transforming the community's agricultural practices.

Together with her husband, Jeff Sotero, Concepcion has turned a once-idle plot of land into a thriving organic farm.

Today, they produce certified-organic vegetables like lettuce, tomatoes, spinach and eggplant, accredited through the cooperative's Participatory Guarantee System.

This collaboration with Naturland has not only helped the cooperative elevate their organic practices while strengthening local biodiversity but will soon open access to premium markets in Metro Manila.

"We started our farm to promote a healthy lifestyle and restore the environment, and it has benefitted not just the land but our own well-being," Concepcion shared.

### 3. Dom-an Macagne, Sagada Farmers Network



Dom-an Macagne is one of the founding members of the Sagada Farmers Network, which advocates for agroecological practices in Sagada, Mountain Province.

She has also been advocating for promoting overall sustainability and community-based development in Sagada vis-à-vis cultural integrity promotion.

Her commitment to organic agriculture, which she sees as deeply rooted in the indigenous farming traditions of her people, led her to participate in one of Naturland's coffee bootcamp. There, she expanded her knowledge of sustainable coffee cultivation, reinforcing her belief in organic methods.

On her own smallholding, Dom-an tends to a variety of temperate vegetables for household consumption and nurtures Arabica coffee trees, which she now manages with improved organic practices learned from the bootcamp.

“Organic farming is an approach to restore sacred relationships between people, land and spirit world to bring about peace and healing in indigenous communities,” she shares.

So, there you have some of the women farmer-partners of Naturland in the Philippines. Not only do they exemplify that organic agriculture is the future, but they also demonstrate the imperative role of women in pushing for overall sustainability and holistic development.



*Follow Naturland Philippines' on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Youtube](#) to get updated on the latest developments about organic agriculture in the Philippines and how you can participate in actualizing and amplifying this advocacy and movement.*

*You can also learn more about Naturland's organic agriculture standards and membership procedures through its following website: [Naturland Philippines](#)*

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***Editor's Note: This press release is sponsored by Naturland. It is published by the Advertising Content Team that is independent from our Editorial Newsroom.***

**<https://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/business-life/2024/09/26/2387854/meet-3-women-farmers-championing-organic-agriculture-philippines>**

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

## **Zambales fishers urged to return to West PH Sea amid Chinese vessels**

By: [Joanna Rose Aglibot](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

Inquirer Central Luzon / 08:58 PM September 26, 2024



Fishermen in Zambales receive 10,000 in cash, food packs and first aid kits during a two-day Congress at the Subic Municipal Gymnasium organized by various government agencies early this week. (Photo by Joanna Rose Aglibot)

SUBIC, Zambales – Fishermen in Zambales were encouraged by the Philippine Coast Guard to continue fishing in the West Philippine Sea (WPS), despite the increasing presence of Chinese vessels.

During a Fishermen’s Congress here from Monday to Tuesday (Sept. 23-24) , local fisherman Leonido Moralde, who recently returned from a month-long trip in the WPS on Sept. 14, reported seeing a rise in the number of Chinese vessels near the disputed Scarborough Shoal (Bajo de Masinloc or Panatag).

“That was probably the most we’ve seen,” said Moralde.

He added: “We couldn’t get close, but even from a distance, we could spot eight vessels. One was gray, and we thought it was ours, but when we saw the red flag, we realized it was Chinese.”

Due to the worsening situation, Moralde and his fellow fishermen decided to relocate their payao (fish aggregating device) near Scarborough Shoal and move it 150 nautical miles (277 kilometers) away from Subic.

“Here in the municipal waters, there are many small boats competing with us,” Moralde explained.

During the congress forum, Commodore Jay Tarriela, Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) spokesperson for the West Philippine Sea, encouraged the fishermen to return to the WPS—not just for fishing but to assert the country’s sovereign rights over the area.

“We have limited resources, so the Philippine Coast Guard and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources can’t be there 24/7,” Tarriela said.

He added: “But we strategically deploy our vessels when the weather is favorable around Bajo de Masinloc.”

However, fishermen like Moralde remain concerned, especially given China’s increasing aggression.

“We’re still worried because we’re always out there at sea. Even if we’re far from the shoal, we still face harassment,” Moralde said.

Moralde was one of 150 fishermen who attended the two-day Congress at the Subic Municipal Gymnasium.

They participated in first aid and life support training, community forums to discuss their concerns, and received P10,000 in cash, food packs, and first aid kits.

The event was organized by the National Security Council (NSC) in collaboration with the Philippine Coast Guard, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine Information Agency, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Department of Agriculture, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and Department of Health.

NSC Assistant Director General Jonathan Malaya assured the fishermen that the government is taking the WPS issue seriously.

“I want to hear your needs and concerns so our government can address them. While we can’t fulfill all your needs, we will do everything we can to support your fishing efforts,” Malaya said.

*For comprehensive coverage, in-depth analysis, visit our special page for [West Philippine Sea updates](#). Stay informed with articles, videos, and expert opinions.*

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1987336/zambales-fishers-urged-to-return-to-west-ph-sea-amid-chinese-vessels>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Anti-agri economic sabotage law a ‘turning point’ for PH – Romualdez

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 10:53 PM September 26, 2024



Prices of red onion soared to P600 per kilogram at the Marikina Public Market in December 2022— GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

MANILA, Philippines — Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez believes the newly signed law declaring agricultural smuggling and other illegal activities related to the industry as economic sabotage is a “turning point” for farmers and the country’s food self-sufficiency bid.

In a statement on Thursday, Romualdez said the administration sent a strong message against agricultural smuggling with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s signing of Republic Act No. 12002 or the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act.

“This law marks a critical turning point in our fight to defend the livelihood of Filipino farmers and fisherfolk and secure affordable food for all,” Romualdez said after Marcos signed the measure.

“With the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act in place, we are sending a clear message: there will be no tolerance for those who manipulate the market and jeopardize our food supply,” he added.

Marcos said the new law would classify smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, and cartel operations involving agricultural and fishery products as economic sabotage, which is a non-bailable offense punishable by life imprisonment.

The law also creates the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council which the President will head, and the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Enforcement Group.

“Let me be clear: This law does not just target the masterminds; it holds all accomplices accountable—financiers, brokers, employees, even transporters,” Marcos said during the ceremonial signing of the measure.

According to Romualdez, the law would prevent a rapid rise in the price of goods due to hoarding.

“For far too long, the greed of a few has resulted in the suffering of many, driving up food prices and hurting the very people who work tirelessly to provide for our nation,” he said. “This law ensures that those who engage in these exploitative practices will face the full weight of the law.”

“This law is a major victory for our farmers, fisherfolk, and consumers, and it underscores our unwavering commitment to safeguarding our nation’s food security,” he added.

One of the first problems encountered by the Marcos administration in June 2022 was a rapid rise in the price of onions, starting from P250 to P400 per kilogram, before skyrocketing to P600 to P720 during the holiday season.

The issue prompted Congress to probe possible collusion between importers, cold storage facility owners, truckers, and traders as economic minds in the House believe an artificial shortage was created.

In May 2023, Marikina 2nd District Rep. Stella Quimbo and House committee on agriculture chairperson Quezon 1st District Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga presented a matrix showing how smugglers take advantage of farmers and manipulate the prices of products, particularly onions.

Quimbo explained that since farmers would need cold storage to keep onions fresh, traders who are conniving with cold storage operators would falsely claim that slots are already filled up.

Traders would then urge farmers to sell their produce at lower farm gate prices, as it would be better to earn from the onions than to leave them spoiled due to the lack of cold storage rooms.

Quimbo also said there were cases when storage facilities reserved spaces for big cold storage to ensure that farmers could not deposit their onions anywhere.

With the new law creating the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council and the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Enforcement Group, farmers and consumers can be assured that a multi-agency body will constantly oversee the enforcement of the measure, Romualdez said.

Among the members of the council are the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Justice, the Department of Finance, and the Anti-Money Laundering Council.

“This council will be the backbone of our efforts to protect the integrity of our food supply chain by coordinating various agencies and leveraging their expertise, ensuring we can respond swiftly and decisively to any attempts to manipulate the market,” Romualdez said.

“As we move forward, we must remain vigilant and steadfast in protecting our agricultural sector. This law is a crucial step in ensuring that our farmers and fisherfolk can thrive, and that Filipino families can access affordable food,” he added. “The signing of the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act is a strong signal that we will no longer allow a few to profit at the expense of many. The protection of our agriculture and the welfare of the Filipino people are our top priorities.”

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1987425/anti-agri-economic-sabotage-law-a-turning-point-for-ph-romualdez>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Marcos signs law punishing agri smugglers

By: [Julie M. Aurelio](#) - Reporter / [@JMAurelioINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:46 AM September 27, 2024



FILE PHOTO: President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. Photo from the official Facebook page of PCO

MANILA, Philippines — Stressing the need to shield both consumers and the agriculture sector from smuggling, hoarding, profiteering and cartel activities, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed on Thursday Republic Act No. 12022 which penalizes such offenses as nonbailable acts of agricultural economic sabotage. Aimed at protecting the agriculture sector and consumer, the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act imposes harsher penalties of life imprisonment for those convicted of agricultural smuggling, hoarding, profiteering and cartel activities plus a fine five times the value of the involved agri-fisheries products.

Those knowingly transporting or storing smuggled products or allowing the use of ports, resorts or airports in the commission of economic sabotage will face 20 to 30 years imprisonment and a fine thrice the value of the involved agri-fisheries products. After signing the measure into law, the President stressed that economic sabotage in agriculture was “not simply a tale of dubious deals and inflated profits; it manifests as well as hunger, desperation and betrayal.”

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1987432/marcos-signs-law-punishing-agri-smugglers>

## BUSINESS WORLD:

# DoF calls for action vs ASF, cites need to contain inflation

September 26, 2024 | 8:29 pm



FREEPIK

GOVERNMENT agencies need to act in concert to contain African Swine Fever (ASF), including expediting the release of subsidies to aid in the vaccination effort, due to the urgent need to manage inflation, the Department of Finance (DoF) said.

In a statement posted on its Facebook page, the DoF said it called for measures to control ASF after the Economic Development Group and the Inter-Agency Committee on Inflation and Market Outlook discussed measures on Sept. 25 to contain inflation.

“To manage food inflation, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) called on the implementing agencies to employ supply-augmenting programs and enforce disease control measures, including the rollout of ASF vaccines and the adoption of Integrated Pest Management technologies for sugar,” the DoF said in a statement.

During the meeting, the Department of Agriculture said it is looking at other means of toughening biosecurity measures against ASF.

Among the measures against non-food inflation, the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board said it wants to partner with major payment services providers to validate its master list of fuel subsidy beneficiaries. These beneficiaries will be eligible to buy cheap fuel to ease the pressure on the government to approve fare hikes. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/26/624243/dof-calls-for-action-vs-asf-cites-need-to-contain-inflation/>

## **BUSINESS WORLD:**

# **NEDA sees ‘Konektadong Pinoy’ boosting agri, education, health**

September 26, 2024 | 8:28 pm



UNSPLASH

THE National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) called for the immediate approval of the Konektadong Pinoy bill, which it expects to help bolster growth in education and agriculture.

“The Konektadong Pinoy Bill is crucial to the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028, as it will usher advancements across various sectors, including ICT (information and communications technology), education, health, and agriculture,” NEDA Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan was quoted as saying in a statement.

The bill “aligns with the government’s commitment to ensuring fast, reliable, and affordable internet access for all Filipinos,” NEDA said.

Senate Bill No. 2699 or the Konektadong Pinoy bill seeks to make internet access more affordable and equitable even in remote areas by promoting fair competition and removing barriers to entry in the data transmission industry.

The bill will help bridge the digital divide and allow the Philippines to add momentum to the growth of the digital economy, NEDA said in a policy note published in February.

The proposed law divides the data transmission network to four key main segments — international gateway facilities; the core or backbone network; the so-called middle mile; and the so-called last mile. It may also include any other segment defined by the Department of Information and Communications Technology.

Under the bill, a data transmission industry participant would be “allowed to deploy satellite technology and use associated spectrum in any or all segments of their broadband network without the need to go through lease or rent capacity.”

It also seeks to create a Spectrum Management Policy Framework to ensure fair competition, make the system adaptable to technological advances, and the efficient use of data transmission frequencies.

The Senate has yet to pass its Konektadong Pinoy bill, which is awaiting second reading.

It is one of the 23 priority measures Congress has yet to approve.

These priority bills include the Amendments to the Foreign Investors’ Long-Term Lease Act; the proposed Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program Act; the proposed Self-Reliant Defense Posture Revitalization Act; the proposed Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises to Maximize Opportunities for Reinvigorating the Economy (CREATE MORE) Act; the proposed Philippine Maritime Zones Act; the proposed Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act; and the proposed Enterprise-Based Education and Training Framework Act.

Measures also on the LEDAC list include the proposed Blue Economy Act; Amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law, the proposed Universal Health Care Act, the proposed Electric Power Industry Reform Act; the proposed Right-of-Way Act; the proposed Rationalization of the Mining Fiscal Regime; the proposed E-Government Act or E-Governance Act; the measure establishing the Department of Water Resources; the proposed Mandatory Reserve Officers’ Training Corps Act; and the proposed Unified System of Separation, Retirement, and Pension of Military and Uniformed Personnel (MUP).

Other priority bills include the Waste-to-Energy Bill; Amendments to the Agrarian Reform Law; Reforms to Philippine Capital Markets; Excise Tax on Single-Use Plastics; the proposed New Government Auditing Code; and the proposed Philippine Immigration Act. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/26/624242/neda-sees-konektadong-pinoy-boosting-agri-education-health/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Traders cornering tariff cut benefits, farmers say

September 26, 2024 | 8:27 pm



REUTERS

FARMERS said savings from the lower tariffs on rice have been pocketed by traders instead of being passed on to consumers.

“The fact that retail prices hardly moved means that importers, wholesalers and retailers pocketed most of the P5 billion in savings. They, and not the consumers, have been the real beneficiaries of the tariff cuts,” Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said in a statement.

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

Rice imports totaled 3.09 million metric tons as of Sept. 19, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry.

According to the FFF, rice traders have absorbed a P6.70 per kilogram saving from the lower tariff, “assuming a landed cost of \$600 per MT and an exchange rate of P56 per dollar.”

It estimated total tariff savings from the more than 800,000 MT that arrived between July and mid-September at more than P5 billion.

Mr. Montemayor said that rice price may decline starting late September even without the tariff as the rice harvest season begins.

“Farmers have begun harvesting their main crop. Importers will logically try to sell now, when prices are still high. But instead of forwarding their savings to consumers, they are maximizing their profit margins,” he added.

The Department of Agriculture has said that the lower tariffs on rice will lead to a P5 to P7 per kilogram drop in the price of imported rice.

The impact on prices is expected to start showing up in mid-October, but more significant effects could be seen by January.

“Hopefully, *tuloy-tuloy ng pababa 'yan* by January. *Siguro makuha natin* at least less P5 by January (We hope the decrease in rice prices will continue up to January, when prices will fall by about P5 per kilo at least),” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. told reporters.

Mr. Laurel added that the rice being consumed at the moment was likely imported during the first half when tariffs were high, though the supply of high-tariff rice is expected to run out by mid-October. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/26/624240/traders-cornering-tariff-cut-benefits-farmers-say/>



**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# NFA bats for fund releases to hit palay procurement goals

September 26, 2024 | 8:27 pm



Sacks of palay or unmilled rice are seen inside a National Food Authority (NFA) warehouse in Balagtas, Bulacan. — PHILIPPINE STAR/MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

THE National Food Authority (NFA) said it is seeking funding to allow it to hit its goals for procuring palay, or unmilled rice.

In a statement on Thursday, NFA acting Administrator Larry R. Lacson said it is seeking P9 billion to bring its palay procurement budget to P11 billion this year.

“NFA has been using left over funding of P8.7 billion from 2023 to buy palay from farmers,” it said.

In the first half, the NFA used P5.3 billion to purchase 175,000 metric tons (MT) of palay, equivalent to 3.5 million bags, from domestic farmers.

It hopes to have purchased up to 8.7 million bags of palay before the end of the year, equivalent to up 435,000 MT of palay.

“The NFA asked the Department of Budget and Management to release the funds for palay procurement so we can support farmers and stabilize prices during the harvest this wet season,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said.

He added that the NFA will purchase palay from farmers at P21 and P23 per kilogram, depending on location and grading of the grain, in accordance with a decision in April approving variable pricing.

In June, the NFA Council approved a ceiling price for palay purchases of P30 per kilo, against the P23 per kilo previously. The floor price was lifted to P17 from P16 per kg.

Mr. Laurel said this measure makes it attractive for farmers to sell to the NFA as opposed to private traders, who were reportedly buying rice at P16-P17 a kilo in Nueva Ecija.

Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law of 2019, restricted the NFA to purchasing domestically harvested rice to build up its emergency reserves. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/26/624238/nfa-bats-for-fund-releases-to-hit-palay-procurement-goals/>



**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Nomura sees wider PHL current account deficit

September 27, 2024 | 12:33 am



PHILIPPINE STAR/RYAN BALDEMOR

By **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**, *Reporter*

THE PHILIPPINES' current account gap is expected to widen next year, according to Nomura Global Markets Research, reflecting a surge in imports amid a recovering economy and rising commodity prices.

"We still forecast a gradual widening of the current account deficit to 2.5% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2025 from 2.3% in 2024, driven by the same factors that led to the return of the deficits," Nomura analysts Euben Paracuelles and Nabila Amani said in a report.

They did not provide an amount.

In the first half of the year, the country's current account deficit stood at \$7.1 billion, accounting for 3.2% of GDP.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) estimates the current account deficit to reach \$6.8 billion this year, equivalent to 1.5% of economic output. It expects the deficit to hit \$5.5 billion or 1.1% of GDP next year.

"From a savings-investment perspective, the swing to the current account deficit reflects a pickup in investment ratios, while savings ratios have fallen, especially after the pandemic," Nomura said.

It also noted that the current account deficit has been driven by the widening goods trade deficit.

The Philippines' trade deficit widened by 18.05% to \$4.87 billion in July, according to data from the local statistics agency.

In July, the value of imports increased by 7.2% year on year to \$11.12 billion, the fastest rise since 13% in April. It was also the highest since March 2023.

The country's balance of trade in goods has been in the red for nine years.

“Unlike regional peers, goods exports have remained relatively flat over the past several years, likely reflecting the lack of industrial policy to move up the value chain, particularly in the electronics sector (60% of goods exports),” Nomura said.

“In contrast, imports have more than doubled, reflecting rising domestic demand and an increasingly supply-constrained economy.”

It noted the persistent rise in food imports, particularly rice, reflecting “low productivity in the agriculture sector and the vulnerability to weather-related shocks and external risks.”

In June, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. issued Executive Order No. 62, cutting tariffs on rice imports to 15% from 35% until 2028.

“The country remains one of the region's largest oil importers and is therefore susceptible to international crude oil price hikes,” it added.

Nomura also said the trade deficit is “no longer being fully offset by the sum of worker remittances (secondary income) and receipts from outsourcing and tourism sectors (services balance).”

Data from Nomura showed that in nominal dollar terms, worker remittance growth has slowed to 3.1% per year since 2018 from the 6% average from 2011 to 2017.

“Adjusted for inflation and in local currency terms, real remittance growth is even lower, at just 0.7% on average,” it added.

Meanwhile, Nomura said the Philippines' balance of payments (BoP) has undergone “structural changes” in the past decade.

“First, the current account balance has shifted to a deficit from a surplus since 2016 (except during the pandemic),” it said. “Net unclassified items have also added to the deficit.”

The capital and financial account surplus has also “expanded significantly” after the pandemic, the central bank said and has remained elevated due to external state loans.

Financial account outflows stood at \$10.5 billion in the first half, according to data from the central bank.

“Given these new BoP dynamics, we look at a ‘broad basic balance,’ which is showing an increasing deficit and implies greater sensitivity of the BoP to swings in portfolio flows and hence to risk-on/risk-off episodes,” Nomura said.

The country’s BoP level stood at a \$1.6-billion surplus as of August.

“The composition of the capital and financial surplus has changed, with external loans now larger than net foreign direct investments (FDI), which indicates a new way of current account deficit financing,” Nomura said.

“A closer look at these loans shows a healthy pipeline through 2025, but the drawdowns are irregular and only partially converted into local currency, contributing to BoP volatility,” it added.

The central bank expects the BoP to post a surplus of \$2.3 billion this year, equivalent to 0.5% of GDP.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2024/09/27/624215/nomura-sees-wider-phl-current-account-deficit/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Bicam report raising RCEF allocation to P30B ratified

September 26, 2024 | 8:29 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/KRIZ JOHN ROSALES  
By **John Victor D. Ordoñez**, Reporter

CONGRESS late Wednesday ratified the bicameral conference committee report on a bill seeking to raise the yearly allocation of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) to P30 billion from P10 billion until 2031.

The measure coming out of bicam, which harmonized Senate Bill No. 2779 and House Bill No. 10381, also requires the National Food Authority (NFA) must maintain a rice reserve equivalent to at least 15 days' demand, according to the bicam report sent to *BusinessWorld* on Thursday.

The measure would also give the Department of Agriculture (DA) the authority to sell NFA rice reserves in times of shortage and high rice prices to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Office of Civil Defense, local government units (LGUs), and the KADIWA network of stores that sell government-subsidized goods.

The measure amends the Rice Tariffication Law of 2019 or Republic Act No. 11203. RA 11203 opened up to private entities the rice import trade, which had previously been dominated by the NFA, which imported the

grain via government-to-government deals. The private traders instead had to pay a tariff of 35% on their shipments of Southeast Asian grain. The tariff has since been reduced to 15% and applies to rice from all sources.

According to the bicam report, the Secretary of Agriculture will be given the authority to designate importing entities during times of “extraordinarily” high prices. The NFA remains barred from importing rice.

Under the reconciled version of the bill, the importing entity is required to ship rice at least cost following the conclusion of government-to-government supply agreements.

It also requires the DA to maintain a rice buffer fund of P5 billion during food security emergencies.

The P30-billion RCEF allocation will fund the development of high-quality inbred rice seed, the distribution of cash aid for farmers, and the construction of solar-powered irrigation systems and composting facilities.

Rice tariff collections amounted to about P30 billion last year, according to the Bureau of Customs.

The 2019 law also restricted the NFA to buying domestic grain to maintain an emergency reserve of rice for use during calamities.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/26/624245/bicam-report-raising-rcef-allocation-to-p30b-ratified/>



**REMATE:**

# Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, ikinatuwa ng DA

September 26, 2024 18:32



MANILA, Philippines –

TINANGGAP ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. ang pagtinta sa Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, isang batas na magpapataw ng mas mahigpit na parusa laban sa mga ‘smugglers at hoarders’ ng agricultural food products kabilang na ang mga cartel.

“This new law that penalizes violators with higher fines and long jail terms, should instill fear in the minds of smugglers and hoarders, and force them to mend their ways,” ayon kay Tiu Laurel.

“This would also benefit our farmers and fisherfolk whose livelihood are imperiled by unscrupulous hoarders and smugglers,” dagdag na wika nito.

Nilagdaan upang maging ganap na batas ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr., araw ng Miyerkules, itinuturing ng Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act (AGES) ang smuggling at hoarding ng agricultural food products bilang economic sabotage kapag ang halaga ng kalakal ay lumampas sa P10 million. Kinokonsidera rin na economic sabotage ang paglikha sa cartel at financing smugglers at hoarders.

“Aside from a fine that is five-times the value of smuggled or hoarded agricultural or fishery products, violators face life imprisonment if proven guilty,” ayon sa DA.

Ang Agricultural products na saklaw ng AGES ay bigas, mais, baka at iba pang ruminants, baboy, manok, bawang, sibuyas, at iba pang gulay, prutas , isda, at iba pang aquatic products sa kanilang raw state.

“AGES also grants rewards of up to P20 million and other incentives to those who will provide information that would lead to the investigation, arrest, prosecution and conviction of smugglers and hoarders. This should lead to the radical reduction of their ranks,” ayon kay Tiu Laurel.

Samantala, nire-require naman ng batas ang pagtatatag at pagpapanatili ng Daily Price Index, ang Bureau of Agricultural Research at Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service ng DA ang mamamahala nito. *Kris Jose*

<https://remate.ph/anti-agricultural-economic-sabotage-act-ikinatuwa-ng-da/>

**REMATE:**

## **30 tumba sa red tide poison sa Samar**

September 26, 2024 18:19



TACLOBAN CITY – Hindi bababa sa 30 indibidwal ang naiulat na dumanas ng red tide poisoning, na kilala rin bilang paralytic shellfish poisoning, matapos kumain ng kontaminadong tahong o green mussels sa Barangay Parasan, Daram, Samar, noong Miyerkules, Setyembre 25.

Sinabi ng Regional Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit na ang mga apektadong indibidwal ay walong bata at 22 matatanda.

Labing siyam ay humingi ng medikal na konsultasyon at na-admit sa Samar Provincial Hospital sa Catbalogan City, Samar. Labing-isa ang ginagamot bilang mga outpatient.

Sinabi ng Department of Health-8 na ang mga pasyente ay nakaranas ng mga sintomas tulad ng pananakit ng ulo, pamamanhid ng katawan, pamamanhid ng extremity, pagkahilo, pagsusuka, at pananakit ng tiyan matapos kumain ng tahong na inani sa dagat ng Tinaogan, Zumarraga, Samar.

Nanindigan ang Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)-8 na ang dagat ng Daram at Zumarraga ay kasama sa pitong dagat at look sa bansa na nananatiling positibo sa red tide. **RNT**

<https://remate.ph/30-tumba-sa-red-tide-poison-sa-samar/>



**REMATE:**

# **Nagdedeklara sa smuggling, hoarding ng agri products na economic sabotage, isinabatas na!**

September 26, 2024 17:55



MANILA, Philippines – Nilagdaan ni Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. nitong Huwebes bilang batas ang panukalang Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act habang hinahangad ng pamahalaan na hadlangan ang pagpasok ng mga smuggled na produktong pang-agrikultura sa bansa.

Ang ceremonial signing of the law ay ginanap sa Kalayaan Hall ng Malacañang Palace.

”Ang pagpasa ng Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act ay magtatakda ng mga pagbabagong resulta. Ito ay isang proactive na hakbang upang maiwasan ang pagpasok ng mga smuggled agricultural products, na tinitiyak na ang mga tamang tungkulin at buwis ay binabayaran habang nagpapataw ng mas mataas na parusa sa mga lalabag,” sabi ni Marcos.

”Ang batas na ito ay humuhubog sa isang mas malakas, mas matatag na sektor ng agrikultura na nagtatanggol sa ating mga magsasaka at sa ating mga mamimili,” dagdag niya.

Sa ilalim ng bagong batas, ang pag-iimbak ng agrikultura ay ituturing na economic sabotage kung ang isang tao o kumbinasyon ng mga tao ay nagtataglay ng mga stock ng mga produktong pang-agrikultura at pangisdaan na lampas sa 30% ng kanilang normal na antas ng imbentaryo dalawang linggo pagkatapos ng deklarasyon ng isang abnormal na sitwasyon, isang emergency, o isang state of calamity.

Isang Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council, na pamumunuan ni Marcos, ang bubuuin para ipatupad ang batas at matiyak na mabilis at mapagpasyang aksyon ang gagawin laban sa sinumang maglalakas-loob na sabotahe ang sektor ng agrikultura.

Dagdag pa, ang isang Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Enforcement Group ay itatatag din upang lansagin ang mga operasyon ng smuggling at hulihin ang mga nagkasala.

Sinabi ni Marcos na itinatadhana rin ng batas ang pagbuo ng isang espesyal na pangkat ng mga tagausig sa buong bansa upang mapabilis ang mga kaso na may kaugnayan sa pagsasabotahe sa agrikultura.

Gagawa rin ng Daily Price Index para subaybayan at i-publish ang umiiral na retail na presyo ng mga produktong pang-agrikultura at pangisdaan sa lahat ng rehiyon upang magarantiya ang transparency at pananagutan.

Ang bagong batas ay nagtatadhana para sa paglikha ng isang oversight committee at naglalaan ng paunang pondo na P500 milyon sa ilalim ng Tanggapan ng Pangulo para sa pagpapatupad nito.

Noong Setyembre ng nakaraang taon, pinatunayan ni Marcos ang panukalang batas, na tinukoy ang pagsasabotahe sa ekonomiya ng agrikultura at pagpapataw ng mas matinding parusa para sa mga lumalabag, bilang apurahan.

Nagpahayag si Marcos ng paniniwala na ang panukala ay magtataguyod ng produktibidad ng sektor ng agrikultura, magpoprotekta sa mga magsasaka at mangingisda mula sa mga walang prinsipyong mangangalakal at importer, at matiyak ang makatwiran at abot-kayang presyo ng mga produktong pang-agrikultura at pangisdaan para sa mga mamimili. *RNT*

<https://remate.ph/nagdedeklara-sa-smuggling-hoarding-ng-agri-products-na-economic-sabotage-isinabatas-na/>

**REMATE:**

# Rice buffer stock ng Pinas siniguro ng NFA; palay bibilhin ng mahal sa mga magsasaka

September 26, 2024 14:22



MANILA, Philippines – Tiniyak ng National Food Authority (NFA) nitong Miyerkules ang magandang pambansang rice buffer stock at mas mataas na presyo ng pagbili upang maprotektahan ang kapakanan ng mga lokal na magsasaka sa bansa.

Sa isang ambush interview, sinabi ni NFA Administrator Larry Lacson na ang rice buffer stock ay maaari na ngayong tumagal ng hanggang 4.7 o halos limang araw.

“As of September 18, 2024, ang stocks natin nationwide kung iko-convert mo ito sa bigas, nasa 3.1 million bags or around 157,000 metric tons,” ayon sa opisyal.

Kaugnay nito sinabi ni Lacson na nananatiling mataas ang presyo ng pagbili ng palay sa mga lokal na magsasaka kumpara sa mga antas na inaalok ng ilang mangangalakal.

“Mayroon din kaming na-monitor na ganyang prices, PHP16, PHP17 (per kilo) bandang Region III. E kami naman, ang presyo naman namin sa NFA is PHP21 to PHP23 iyong fresh versus the PHP16 to PHP17 ng mga traders,” dagdag pa nito.

Samantala para sa malinis at tuyo na palay, nagtakda ang NFA ng presyo ng pagbili na PHP23/kg hanggang PHP30/kg.

Sinabi ni Lacson na ang diskarte sa pagpepresyo ng NFA ay nakakatulong na protektahan ang mga magsasaka mula sa mga mangangalakal na maaaring magsamantala sa kanila.

“Dahil maganda ang presyo namin, nape-pressure din si trader na iangat ng kaunti para makakuha naman siya kasi iyon ang negosyo nila,” aniya.

Gayunpaman, sinabi niya na ang pagbili ng pagsasaayos ng presyo ay posible pa rin depende sa pagbabagu-bago ng “puwersa sa pamilihan.”

Kaugnay nito tiniyak niya na uunahin pa rin ang kapakanan ng mga lokal na magsasaka lalo na sa panahon ng peak harvest season. (*Santi Celario*)

<https://remate.ph/rice-buffer-stock-ng-pinas-siniguro-ng-nfa-palay-bibilhin-ng-mahal-sa-mga-magsasaka/>

**REMATE:**

# Importers na may overstaying na bigas sa pantalan binalaan na ma-blacklist

September 26, 2024 13:56



MANILA, Philippines – Nagbabala ang Department of Agriculture (DA) nitong Miyerkules sa mga importer na sangkot umano sa overstaying ng imported na bigas sa mga pantalan sa Maynila.

Ito ay matapos ang 888 shipping vans na naglalaman ng mahigit 20,000 metric tons (MT) ng imported na bigas ay naiulat na overstaying, kung saan ang ilan ay nanatili sa pantalan ng siyam na buwan.

“Definitely, kailangan i-blacklist iyong mga ganoong klaseng importers,” ayon sa ambush interbyu kay DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Aniya, ang pagsisikap ng DA, katuwang ang Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), ay dapat magsilbing malaking babala laban sa mga walang prinsipyong importer.

Samantala, tiniyak naman ng agriculture chief ang due process sa pag-iimbestiga sa mga dahilan sa likod ng “overstaying.”

“Of course, we have to really go look at ano ba nangyari para makita talaga. Maybe may justified reason naman or whatever. We have to give fair ano din naman,” sabi ni Tiu Laurel.

Gayunpaman, nanindigan siya na ang pag-import ng bigas ay dapat ilabas pitong araw pagkatapos ng pagbabawas ng kargamento.

Nauna nang pinuri ng DA ang mabilis na pagkilos ng PPA laban sa posibleng pag-imbak ng ilang consignee.

Samantala, sinabi ng PPA General Manager na si Jay Santiago na mayroong 530 containers na hindi pa mahuhuli ng mga consignee, kasunod ng pagpapalabas ng 300 containers noong weekend.

“Iyan pong mga overstaying na containers na yan ay pagdating po ng Oktubre ay ipagbibigay na po natin sa Department of Agriculture at ieendorso na po natin yan sa Bureau of Customs para madeklara na abandonado at ma-dispose na po nila” ayon dito sa hiwalay na interbyu.

Para sa mga inabandunang kargamento, sinabi ni Tiu Laurel na ang pag-import ng bigas ay maaaring maibalik sa kanilang bansang pinagmulan o itapon sa pamamagitan ng pagkasira. (*Santi Celario*)

<https://remate.ph/importers-na-may-overstaying-na-bigas-sa-pantalan-binalaan-na-ma-blacklist/>



**REMATE:**

# DA, NIA budget lusot na sa Kamara

September 26, 2024 09:59



MANILA, Philippines – Lumusot at matagumpay na naipasa ng kani-kanilang badyet ng Department of Agriculture (DA) at National Irrigation Administration (NIA) para sa 2025 ang plenary deliberations sa House of Representatives, kung saan ilang mambabatas ang nangako na higit pang dagdagan ang mga alokasyon ng pondo upang palakasin ang produksyon ng sakahan at palakihin ang kita ng sakahan.

Nabatid sa ulat na para sa 2025, nakatakdang tumanggap ang DA ng badyet na P200.19 bilyon, na sumasalamin sa 19.5 porsyentong pagtaas mula sa National Expenditure Program (NEP) ngayong taon. Ang iminungkahing badyet ng NIA ay nasa P42.57 bilyon, bahagyang mas mataas kaysa sa NEP noong nakaraang taon na P41.7 bilyon.

Sa kanyang sponsorship speech, binigyang-diin ni Navotas City Rep. Toby Tiangco ang kritikal na papel na ginagampanan ng agrikultura sa pagbibigay ng pagkain para sa bawat Pilipino, sa pagtulak sa ekonomiya at paglikha ng mas maraming trabaho.

Kaugnay nito si Iloilo Rep. Janette Garin, na katuwang na nag-sponsor ng mga badyet para sa parehong mga ahensya, ay umamin na kahit na sa pagtaas ng alokasyon ng NEP, ang mga gastos ay hindi sapat upang matugunan ang mga pangangailangan ng agrikultura dahil sa kakulangan ng makabuluhang pamumuhunan sa nakalipas na tatlong dekada at ang lumalaking pangangailangan sa pagkain ng bansa. Sinabi niya na

ang mga pondo na ilalaan para sa agrikultura ay isang “puhunan sa kinabukasan ng ating bansa.”

Samantala binigyang-diin ni Camarines Sur Rep. Gabriel Bordado ang pangangailangang gawing moderno ang agrikultura ng Pilipinas. “Kailangan talagang taasan ang budgetary allocation para sa Department of Agriculture. Paano mo aasahan na gawing moderno ang agrikultura sa badyet na ito?” sabi niya.

Sinabi ni Rep. Bordado na ang pagpapabuti ng buhay ng milyun-milyong umaasa sa sektor ng sakahan at pagbabawas ng pag-asa sa pag-import ng pagkain ay kinakailangan para sa isang bansang ligtas sa pagkain. (*Santi Celario*)

<https://remate.ph/da-nia-budget-lusot-na-sa-kamara/>

**ABANTE:**

# Romualdez sinita hoarding ng bigas sa pantalan

Abante News

- September 26, 2024



Para kay Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez parang hoarding na rin ang ginagawa ng mga importer na hindi kaagad kunin sa mga pantalan ang kanilang mga shipment ng imported na bigas.

Ito ang sinabi ni Romualdez na nanguna sa isinagawang inspeksiyon sa mga container na naglalaman ng tinatayang 23 milyong kilo ng bigas sa Manila International Container Port (MICP).

“We are here to send a clear message: rice hoarding, smuggling, and other illegal activities that threaten the accessibility and affordability of our staple grain will not be tolerated,” sabi ni Romualdez.

Ayon kay Romualdez ang inspeksiyon noong Miyerkoles ay bahagi ng kampanya ng Kamara de Representantes laban sa hoarding at smuggling upang maprotektahan ang mga mamimili.

Sinabi ng lider ng Kamara na ang mga ulat na nakatambak ang tone-toneladang bigas sa pantalan ay dumaragdag sa pangamba ng mga konsumer na mayroong nagmamanipla ng suplay upang tumaas ang presyo.

Umapela si Romualdez sa mga importer na agad na ilabas ang bigas sa mga pantalan at huwag nang ubusin ang 30-araw na palugit na ibinigay sa ilalim ng Customs Modernization and Tariff Act.

“Parang hoarding din ito pero ginagamit ang facilities ng gobyerno, dahil mas mura dito,” punto ni Romualdez. “Magtulungan na lang tayo imbes na mag-isip kayo na tataas ‘yung profit ninyo at the expense ng ating consumers.” (Billy Begas)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/09/26/romualdez-sinita-hoarding-ng-bigas-sa-pantalan/>

**ABANTE:**

# PBBM nilagdaan Agri Economic Sabotage Act

Abante News

- September 26, 2024



Pirmado na ni Pangulong Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. bilang ganap na batas ang Republic Act no. 12022 o ang Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act sa ginanap na seremonya sa Malacañang nitong Huwebes nang hapon.

Sa pamamagitan ng bagong batas ay magkakaroon ng mas matalim na ngipin laban sa ilegal na mga aktibidad na may kaugnayan sa agricultural economic sabotage kasama na rito ang smuggling, hoarding, profiteering at cartel operations na nagpapataas sa presyo ng mga bilihan.

Sa kanyang talumpati, sinabi ng Pangulo na mahigpit na ipapatupad ang batas upang masigurong maparusahan ang sinumang mananabotahe sa sektor ng agrikultura.

Kasabay ng paglagda sa bagong batas, inihayag ng Pangulo na bubuo ito ng Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Enforcement Group na tututok sa pagbuwag sa smuggling operation at paghuli sa mga gumagawa ng kalokohan.

Nakapaloob sa bagong batas ang pagtatalaga ng special team ng prosecutors sa buong bansa upang mapabilis ang pagsasampa ng mga kasong may kaugnayan sa agricultural sabotage para sa mabilis na paglutas nito.

Sinabi ng Pangulo na sa pamamagitan ng bagong batas, bilang na ang araw ng mga sangkot sa ilegal na aktibidad at hindi na uubra ang mga shortcut, mga palusot at mga nagbubulag-bulagan sa bansa. (Aileen -Taliping)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/09/26/bbm-nilagdaan-agri-economic-sabotage-act/>

**PEOPLE'S JOURNAL:**

# **Embryo Transfer Technology, a new era in goat farming in Cagayan Valley**

**Friday, September 27, 2024 Nelson Santos - PAPI**

THE goat-raising industry in the Philippines is set to benefit from a groundbreaking technology innovation, as the Department of Science and Technology Region 2 (DOST 2), in collaboration with the Isabela State University (ISU) and DOST-PCAARRD, reported the successful implementation of its Embryo Transfer (ET) Technology for goats.

The development was announced by DOST-PCAARRD Executive Director Dr. Reynaldo V. Eborra during the 2024 Regional Science and Technology Week (RSTW) held in Cagayan Valley.

Eborra said five kids were successfully produced using the ET technology, which is part of the Innovative Systems in Advancing Technology-Based Goat Production project funded by the DOST-PCAARRD.



Dr. Ricmar P. Aquino, ISU president, emphasized the importance of technological innovations in goat production, and highlighted key technologies such as semen collection, semen processing, and artificial insemination for small ruminants to modernize goat production and enhance the efficiency and profitability of goat farming.

Science and Technology Secretary Dr. Renato U. Solidum Jr. said the Embryo Transfer Technology enables the production of multiple offspring from a single female goat, significantly enhancing reproductive efficiency.

The process involves superovulation to maximize the oocyte reserves of a female goat, followed by the transfer of fertilized embryos to recipient females. The method increases both the number of offspring and the speed of genetic exchange between herds, thus accelerating the improvement of goat breeds.





The total goat inventory in the Philippines has declined in recent years. The current inventory is estimated at 3.86 million heads, a decrease from previous counts, with over 99 percent of the country's goat population sourced from small-hold farms. The situation highlights the pressing need for improved goat meat production to meet rising demand. Goat meat, or chevon, has been gaining popularity due to its lower calorie, cholesterol, and saturated fat content compared to other meats such as beef, pork, and chicken.

Additionally, the goat industry provides not only nutritious meat and milk but also supports agricultural diversification and offers a vital source of income for small-scale farmers.

Dr. Cristino Nayga delivered the first embryo transfer (ET) kid in June 2023, with four additional kids produced from three other dams in the following months. The kids were derived from dams with a 75 percent Boer bloodline mated with purebred Boer bucks.



The experiment marked a significant milestone in ISU's breeding program, which has been looking at enhancing the population of high-quality, true-to-type goats in Region 2, now branded as the "Cagayan Valley Signature Goat."

DOST has acknowledged the potential of the ET technology to address the challenges faced by the goat industry and enhance productivity for small-hold farmers and has committed to provide essential solutions to strengthen the industry in the Philippines. It said the innovative approach would enhance livestock management and productivity while positioning the goat industry for a more competitive and sustainable future.

<https://journal.com.ph/embryo-transfer-technology-a-new-era-in-goat-farming-in-cagayan-valley/>

# Marcos signs Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act

By Charles Dantes  
September 26, 2024, 4:48 pm

President Ferdinand Marcos on Thursday signed the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, a landmark measure aimed at dismantling smuggling operations and protecting the country's agricultural sector.

During a ceremonial signing at Malacañang, President Marcos addressed lawmakers, government officials, and industry stakeholders, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding farmers and fisherfolk from exploitation by criminal syndicates manipulating agricultural markets.

“We come together not merely to protect but to uplift the very hands that cultivate our fields and that fish our waters, as we embark on the pivotal journey of enacting the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act,” the President said.

The new law classifies agricultural economic sabotage—such as smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, and cartel operations—as a non-bailable offense, punishable by life imprisonment and fines up to five times the value of the goods involved.

The President made it clear that the law targets not only the masterminds but also their accomplices, including financiers, brokers, and even transporters.

“We will confront and dismantle the powerful forces that have long exploited our system for their own gain, ensuring that justice prevails and the dignity of our agricultural sector is upheld,” Mr. Marcos said.

The President cited the significant economic damage caused by these crimes, revealing that the country lost over P3 billion to agricultural smuggling in 2023 alone.

According to the President, in the first nine months of 2024, authorities seized more than P230 million worth of smuggled agricultural products.

He also underscored the national security risks posed by these illegal activities.

“These crimes threaten not only our economy but our national security as well. They jeopardize the livelihood of hardworking Filipino farmers and fisherfolk and threaten the food sustainability of our communities,” he said.

The law establishes the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council, which will be chaired by the President, alongside key Cabinet members.

It also creates an Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Enforcement Group, tasked with dismantling smuggling operations and apprehending offenders. A special team of prosecutors will expedite cases related to agricultural sabotage to ensure swift justice.

President Marcos called on the public to remain vigilant, urging them to report wrongdoing and hold accountable those undermining the nation’s food security.

“The food security of our country, the stability of prices, and the dignity of our farmers depend on us all,” he said.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314502533/marcos-signs-anti-agricultural-economic-sabotage-act.html>

# House approves higher budgets for DA, NIA

By Othel V. Campos  
September 26, 2024, 4:05 pm

The House of Representatives approved higher budgets for the Department of Agriculture and the National Irrigation Administration for 2025.

It approved a budget of P200.19 billion for the DA, or 19.5 percent higher than the 2024 budget and an allocation of P42.57 billion for NIA, also up from P41.7 billion a year earlier.

“Any additional budget that we could get from Congress will allow DA to step up efforts to ensure food security, modernize agriculture, and improve the lives of millions of farmers, fishermen, and their families,” said Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Lawmakers emphasized the need to modernize Philippine agriculture and reduce dependence on food imports, aiming to boost farm production, improve farmer incomes and address challenges in the agricultural sector, including low productivity, high costs and the impact of climate change.

Navotas City Rep. Toby Tiangco, who sponsored the budget, highlighted the crucial role of agriculture in food security, economic growth and job creation.

Iloilo Rep. Janette Garin, a co-sponsor, said that while the increased budgets are welcome, more might be needed to cover the sector’s needs given decades of underinvestment and the country’s growing food requirements.

She said that investing in agriculture is an investment in the country’s future, and noted that additional funding could be secured during bicameral discussions.

Camarines Sur Rep. Gabriel Bordado stressed the need to modernize Philippine agriculture and improve the lives of millions who depend on it.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/business/314502517/house-approves-higher-budgets-for-da-nia.html>

# **Bill to amend the rice tariffication law ratified**

**By Javier Joe Ismael and Red Mendoza**  
**September 27, 2024**

THE Senate approved the bicameral conference committee report on the bill to amend the existing Rice Tariffication Law, Republic Act (RA) 11203.

The Senate version of the measure was also ratified by the House of Representatives. During the Senate's plenary session on Wednesday, Sen. Cynthia Villar highlighted the key points from the bicameral conference committee report on the differing provisions of Senate Bill (SB) 2779 and House Bill (HB) 10381. The bills amend the Agricultural Tariffication Law and extend the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund.

Villar moved to approve and ratify the report, which Senate Deputy Majority Leader JV Ejercito seconded.

In the proposal, the rice competitiveness enhancement fund, which was supposed to end this year, will be extended for another six years or until 2031, and its fund will be increased to P30 billion per year from the current P10 billion.

The fund will come from the tax levied on rice imports. It will be used to purchase machinery and equipment for modern and faster rice planting and harvesting, purchase good rice seeds, and train farmers.

The proposal gives the President the power to stop or limit the volume of rice imported when there is an oversupply due to local harvest and importation.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) secretary will be authorized to sell local rice to government agencies such as hospitals, prisons, and Kadiwa outlets when there is a declaration of a shortage and an extraordinary price increase.

There is also a proposal allowing the DA to import rice if there is no locally produced rice. It can also designate someone to do the importation.

The National Food Authority (NFA) is still not included in the list of those who can make the importation.

The enrolled copy will be sent to Malacañang for the President's signature. The House ratified the report on Wednesday night after acting on a motion by Deputy Majority Leader Janette Garin. The ratification did not go through a voice vote.

Section 3 was amended to reduce the buffer stock requirement from 30 days to 15 days, while Section 5, which discusses the regulatory functions of the DA, storage facilities, silos and controlled temperature cold storages were now included to be registered and be included in a national database.

The House panel at the conference committee was chaired by Quezon Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga together with Rep. Mikaela Suansing, Rep. Ambrosio Cruz Jr., Rep. Wilbert Lee, Rep. Joseph Gilbert Violago, Rep. Yevgeny Vincente Emano, Rep. Robert Raymund Estrella, Rep. Arnan Panaligan, and Rep. Stella Quimbo as members.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/27/news/national/bill-to-amend-the-rice-tariffication-law-ratified/1974273>

# Who is advising the DA secretary?

By Dr. Fermin D. Adriano, PhD

September 27, 2024

WITH 13 undersecretaries and an equivalent number of assistant secretaries, the Department of Agriculture (DA) secretary should have the privilege of being given the best and science-based advice on the proper responses to the many challenges facing the sector. Sadly, recent pronouncements make it doubtful whether he has been accorded sound and judicious advice by his lieutenants.

Recently, the secretary claimed that the reason why rice prices remained high was because traders who imported at a higher tariff of 35 percent were still disposing of their old stocks. This is after the President issued Executive Order (EO) 62 lowering the rice tariff to 15 percent in July and a significant reduction in the global rice prices of around 8-10 percent.

Why does the secretary seem to be acting as an apologist for traders who are engaging in cartel-like behavior? Isn't reducing rice prices (as intended by EO 62) the proper role of the DA rather than justifying the behavior of traders who fear losing hefty profits as a result of the entry of cheaper rice imports?

Why has DA not taken the necessary measures to ensure that rice imports at lower tariff enter the country to immediately tame prices? Are traders' interests more important than those of more than a hundred million Filipino rice consumers?

Then, as a "pampalubag loob" or appeasement, the secretary predicted that rice prices would start to fall in October. Didn't anyone of the 13 undersecretaries and 13 assistant secretaries advise him that October is peak palay (unmilled rice) harvest season? And that during peak harvest, palay farmgate prices historically decline and so do rice prices?

Have any of the secretary's lieutenants informed him that the massive entry of rice imports at lower tariff would lead to a further decline in palay farmgate prices? And that historically, such a decline normally results in a series of vociferous protests from farmer lobby groups and their leftist allies?

Like a script in a movie, the situation will provide the justification to resort to the populist stance of raising the rice tariff again. Which will most likely happen because a petition filed by agricultural lobby groups questioning the legality of the President's issuance of EO 62 is still in the Supreme Court.

Additionally, have any of the secretary's lieutenants informed him that traders usually have a heyday buying palay at low prices from farmers during the October peak harvest season? After the

procurement, traders dry and store the palay in their warehouses, waiting and expecting rice prices to once again rise given peak demand during the Christmas season.

If a petition to raise rice tariff is granted, a decision that will surely be delayed given our slow legal process, it is most likely that small farmers will no longer benefit from high palay prices because the peak harvest season will be over. By the end of November, most of their palay would have been sold at low prices. In other words, the main beneficiary of increasing the tariff once more will be traders.

Then there was this pitch by the DA secretary that the government should be investing in constructing more ports because congestion is a major culprit in raising food prices, particularly rice, only to be rebuffed by the general manager of the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) that port utilization in the country averages only 60 percent, reaching a peak of 90 percent during the Christmas holidays and Chinese New Year.

It was also revealed by PPA that there were hundreds of container vans of rice imports, estimated to be around 500,000 metric tons, lying in port dockyards. Why has DA not pressured rice traders to immediately claim their imports and release these to the market to reduce rice prices? Why become the spokesman for traders by claiming that rice prices are not going down because importers are still disposing of old stocks?

As part of its logistics mantra, the DA is claiming that agricultural and food prices will significantly decline if we address logistics bottlenecks in ensuring food availability. There are even statistics cited that postharvest losses amount to more than 30 percent of production.

Note that the figures on postharvest losses will depend on the product being handled. Perishables like vegetables, fish, meat products, etc., in the absence of proper cold storage facilities, will experience higher postharvest losses. Non-perishables like rice and corn will have lesser postharvest losses.

Since more than 60 percent of the DA's budget is devoted to supporting rice programs, most of the logistics and postharvest facilities are expectedly going to support rice. Will this lead to a substantial decline in rice prices, assuming logistical bottlenecks in rice are successfully addressed by the department?

A group of Philippine Rice Research Institute researchers conducted a rice value chain study (Mataia, et al., 2020) that partly answers this question. They found out that the logistics costs of rice handling represent just over 10 percent of the final retail price. The team also noted that more than 50 percent of the rice retail price is accounted for by production costs. In other words, based on a scientific study, lowering logistics costs will little dent the final retail price of rice, but reducing production costs will work wonders.

With PPA's exposé that large stocks of rice are sitting in dockyards, traders are now in panic withdrawing them in order to avoid being accused of hoarding. The DA declared that it would be inspecting PPA's facilities to force traders to claim their imports and sell them to the market.



The immediate market response was a significant reduction in the rice price by at least P5 per kilo. This could have happened much earlier if the DA took the necessary steps in forcing traders to release their hoarded rice, benefiting millions of rice-eating Filipinos.

The problem now is that palay farmgate prices have also gone down to P18-P20 per kilo from P23 and above. If prices further decline, nearing the palay production cost of around P15 per kilo, that will result in a lot of protests by farmers' groups and their allied lobby groups against the decision to reduce the rice tariff to 15 percent.

Expect this dynamic to unfold in October.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/27/business/top-business/who-is-advising-the-da-secretary/1974838>

# **‘Agri-cool-ture’ approach to raise awareness on agriculture’s role**

Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz  
September 27, 2024

THE chairman of the House Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources has proposed an “agri-cool-ture” approach to effectively raise public awareness over the indispensable role that agriculture plays in the planet’s survival and attract the youth to actively participate in this sector.

Bicol Saro Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan said both present and future generations “must come together in action” to “create a brighter, greener, and bluer future” for farmers, fishermen, consumers, industry stakeholders, and the rest of the planet.

One way to realize this goal is to package agriculture and its related industries, such as fisheries and aquaculture, as “cool” endeavors to make people pay attention and take part in them, Yamsuan said.

“Instead of saying ‘agriculture’, I would say ‘agriCOOLture’. Why? Because we have to make agriculture cool. When something is cool, people pay attention, people care, and people want to take part in it. We cannot do something about anything we have no knowledge about,” Yamsuan told participants on Thursday at the 2024 Sustainable Agriculture Forum organized by the European Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines (ECCP).

Yamsuan said these “cool” initiatives include tapping the power of social media to inform the public that agriculture and fisheries are not focused solely on tedious tasks such as planting and fishing, but can be profitable enterprises using digital tools for the tech-savvy Filipino youth.

“By making agriculture and relevant industries such as fisheries and aquaculture cool, we can raise awareness of their importance and, crucially, attract the attention of the

youth—the future stewards of these sectors. Without their participation, sustainable agri-futures may be a distant goal,” Yamsuan said.

The seventh run of the ECCP’s Sustainable Agriculture Forum has for this year the theme “Cultivating Sustainable Agri-Futures: Nurturing Livelihoods, Harvesting Innovation.”

“I commend the officers and members of the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines and everyone here today for your dedication to driving positive change in the agricultural and fisheries sectors through collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and advocacy for sustainable policies,” Yamsuan said.

Meanwhile, Yamsuan presented before the forum the accomplishments of the Congress to increase productivity, create high-quality jobs, and enhance trade and investments in Philippine agriculture.

These include the enactment of seven laws for the construction of fish ports and 35 fish hatcheries in various parts of the country to help modernize the agri-fisheries sector, Yamsuan said.

In the present 19th Congress, Yamsuan said a total of 114 measures have been successfully passed on third and final reading by the House of Representatives, which include the creation of the Manila Bay Aquatic Resources Management Council that would ensure the consistent and effective adoption and implementation of policies and programs by relevant government agencies and local government units across Manila Bay.

The House has also made good on a 25-year-old promise by approving a bill aimed at establishing resettlement areas that would shield fishermen from natural calamities, Yamsuan said.

Yamsuan also cited the declaration of General Santos City as the Tuna Capital of the Philippines and the establishment of fish hatcheries, fish ports, and other post-harvest facilities that would further strengthen the infrastructure network for the fisheries sector as among the noteworthy bills approved by the House on final reading.

Both houses of Congress have also passed the proposed Blue Economy Act, which establishes a comprehensive and integrated framework for the effective stewardship of the nation's seas and coastlines, Yamsuan said.

Awaiting President Marcos's signature, the measure focuses on safeguarding and preserving marine and coastal ecosystems through robust institutional mechanisms for monitoring and regulatory enforcement.

"Additionally, it fosters international cooperation and engages multiple stakeholders in upholding the nation's rights under international law," Yamsuan said.

"Lastly, it promotes marine science, technology, and innovation programs to capitalize on the growth of the blue economy," he added.

Past and present Congresses have also called for the establishment of a dedicated Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, while the President has included in the list of priority measures of the Legislative Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) a measure to further amend the Fisheries Code with the goal of incorporating and strengthening science-based approaches for identifying fishing areas.

"Let us commit ourselves to realizing a vision of sustainable, inclusive, and resilient agriculture and fisheries sectors. By working together, let us shape agri-futures that nourish livelihoods, stimulate innovation, and safeguard the well-being of current and future generations," Yamsuan said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/27/agri-cool-ture-approach-to-raise-awareness-on-agricultures-role/>

# **DA allots P5-B to ensure farm price stability in 2025**

BusinessMirror  
September 27, 2024

**By Ada Pelonia**

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is setting aside a buffer fund of P5 billion for 2025 to help boost the supply and maintain the stability of prices of agricultural commodities.

Section 9 of the Price Act allowed the DA to stockpile agricultural commodities and devise ways of distributing them for sale at reasonable prices in areas experiencing supply shortages or unreasonable price increases.

The law states that for such purposes, a buffer fund should be allocated in the annual appropriations of the implementing agencies.

“For next year, we are almost sure that we can get that P5 billion buffer fund [...] to be able to use in case we have to trigger the Price Act,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. told reporters on the sidelines of an agriculture forum in Makati City on Thursday.

In July, the DA released implementing guidelines, noting the need to ensure the administrative feasibility of the provision’s implementation.

“May trigger point yung use of these funds. Kung biglang may spike sa market, up or down na medyo malaki, then dadaan ‘yan sa NPCC [National Price Coordinating Council],” he said.

## Sustainable agriculture

Meanwhile, Laurel cited the pressing challenges faced by the country's agriculture sector during the forum, stressing the need for sustainable practices to ensure food security in the country.

“While agriculture remains a cornerstone of our economy, it is grappling with numerous challenges, including climate change, resource degradation, and socio-economic pressures,” he said. “These factors make food security a pressing issue both globally and locally.”

Among the strategic measures outlined by Laurel were expanding agricultural areas, modernizing production systems, and improving post-harvest infrastructure.

He also stressed the importance of utilizing advanced technologies and best practices to enhance productivity and resilience within farming communities.

“To achieve our goals, we must embrace science and information-driven decision-making,” he said. “This includes equipping stakeholders with real-time data and modern tools to make informed choices.”

However, despite proactive strategies, the agri chief acknowledged the obstacles ahead.

“The road to sustainable agriculture is fraught with challenges, but through collaboration with the private sector, NGOs, and international partners, we can overcome them,” he said.

“Only through collective effort can we pave the way for a sustainable agricultural future.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/27/da-allots-p5-b-to-ensure-farm-price-stability-in-2025/>

# **Bill amending rice tariff law awaits Marcos signature**

Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz and Butch Fernandez  
September 27, 2024

THE bill amending the existing Rice Tariffication Law (Republic Act 11203) is now awaiting the signature of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

This after the House of Representatives and the Senate separately ratified the bicameral conference committee report on Wednesday, just before adjourning for their scheduled recess until November 4. With both chambers having already ratified the measure, it is now ready to be sent to Malacañang for the President's approval to officially become law.

The proposed amendments aim to extend the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) for another six years, until 2031, as it was originally set to expire this year. The annual budget for the fund will also be increased from P10 billion to P30 billion.

The bill outlines the allocation of the P30-billion RCEF as follows:

P9 billion for rice farm machinery and equipment; P6 billion for rice seed development, propagation, and promotion; and P15 billion for programs, activities, and projects that will enhance farmers' productivity, strengthen supply resiliency, and address food security emergencies caused by supply shortages or sudden increases in rice prices.

The amendatory bill further clarifies that the sale of the National Food Authority's (NFA) existing rice buffer stock will only be made to government agencies or entities such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Office of Civil Defense-National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (OCD-NDRRMC), local government units, and Kadiwa outlets.



Under the bill, the Department of Agriculture (DA) is required to maintain a buffer fund for rice security emergencies. For this purpose, P5 billion from any current unutilized portion of the DA's budget will not revert to the National Treasury but will be credited to the buffer fund. Additionally, any excess in annual tariff collections from rice imports up to P2 billion will also be credited to this fund.

In case of an imminent or forecasted shortage or other situations requiring government intervention, the President is empowered to authorize the importation of rice at a lower tariff rate for a limited time or specific volume. This authority can only be exercised when Congress is not in session and will take effect immediately.

On the other hand, if there is an oversupply of imported or locally produced rice that causes a significant drop in local prices, the President may suspend or limit further importation until supply and prices stabilize.

The measure also mandates that the NFA maintain an optimal rice buffer stock, which will be sourced exclusively from local farmers. Additionally, the DA Secretary can declare a food security emergency in cases of rice shortages or sustained price hikes.

Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez said amending the Rice Tariffication Law is a crucial step towards ensuring food security and economic stability for Filipino farmers.

“We are committed to making quality rice affordable for all Filipinos while boosting the livelihoods of our local farmers,” he added.

In the Senate, the chair of the Agriculture committee who shepherded both the original and amendatory RTL measures, Sen. Cynthia Villar, thanked her colleagues, for their frank and insightful inputs in tweaking the law so that it better serves the constituents it originally targeted.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/27/bill-amending-rice-tariff-law-awaits-marcos-signature/>

# **NFA seeks funds for purchase of palay**

Ada Pelonia  
September 27, 2024

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is seeking the release of P9 billion this year for the National Food Authority's (NFA) palay procurement program.

“The NFA asked the Department of Budget and Management [DBM] to release the funds for palay procurement so we could support farmers and stabilize prices during the harvest this wet season,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement.

NFA Administrator Larry Lacson said the release of the funds would increase the agency's war chest to around P11 billion to achieve a procurement goal of between 6.4 million to 8.7 million 50-kilo bags of palay before yearend.

According to the DA, the grains agency has been using the leftover budget of P8.7 billion from 2023 to buy palay from farmers earlier this year. In the first half, NFA spent P5.3 billion for 3.5 million bags of palay.

Laurel, who chairs the NFA Council, assured farmers that the agency would purchase palay at P21 to P23 per kilo.

In June, the NFA Council raised the ceiling price for palay purchases to P30 a kilo from P23 a kilo while the floor price was lifted to P17 from P16 per kilogram.

By keeping the buying price at a minimum of P21 a kilo, Laurel said it could address reports that traders were buying palay in Nueva Ecija at P16 to P17 a kilo.

Meanwhile, Lacson said its agreement with the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) would allow the agency to more effectively pursue its mandate of building a rice buffer stock.

“Our convergence with NIA and DA regional offices has allowed us to use smaller trucks to go directly to the farms to buy palay, reducing the cost of farmers,” Lacson said.

The DA said the grains agency has already procured a total of 4 million bags as of September 25.

Lacson recently said that the government’s rice inventory can feed the nation for five days. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/26/nfa-rice-inventory-can-feed-entire-country-for-5-days/>)

He noted that the grains agency’s stockpile reached 3.1 million 50-kilo bags or 157,000 metric tons (MT) of rice as of posting.

“The entire Philippines can be fed for up to...almost 5 days,” Lacson said, partly in Filipino, in a radio interview on Wednesday.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/27/nfa-seeks-funds-for-purchase-of-palay/>

# Rice importers pocketed over ₱5B from tariff cuts

Ada Pelonia  
September 27, 2024

THE Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) claims that importers pocketed over P5 billion in extra profits from the rice tariff cut.

The cut was applied after President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. issued Executive Order (EO) 62 last June. The issuance of EO 62 effectively reduced rice tariffs to 15 percent from 35 percent as Marcos hoped retail prices could be reduced between P5 and P7. The Chief Executive's order took effect on July 7.

However, the FFF said retail prices of both regular and well-milled rice declined by only P0.40 per kilo, based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). This was significantly below projections that prices would fall by as much as P7 per kilo due to lower duties, according to the organization.

The FFF calculated that rice importers decreased their tariff payments by P6.70 per kilo, assuming a landed cost of \$600 per metric ton (MT) and an exchange rate of P56 per dollar.

The FFF added that total tariff savings from the more than 800,000 MT that arrived between July and mid-September amounted to over P5 billion.

“The fact that retail prices hardly moved means that importers, wholesalers and retailers pocketed most of the P5 billion in savings. They, and not the consumers, have been the real beneficiaries of the tariff cuts,” FFF National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor was quoted in the statement as saying.

The group also debunked claims that importers were withholding stocks in ports of entry or warehouses while waiting for prices to rise.

“Rice prices may decline beginning late September, as farmers have begun harvesting their main crop. Importers will logically try to sell now, when prices are still high. But instead of forwarding their savings to consumers, they are maximizing their profit margins,” Montemayor said.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. maintained that rice prices would not immediately decline, noting that it was only at the end of August that excess stocks bought at higher tariffs were exhausted.

According to Laurel, Filipinos were consuming this month rice from palay, which local traders bought at a price of P29.30 per kilo in the first half of the year.

“Yung P29.30 per kilo na palay na nabili nang January to June, ang equivalent na presyo niyan [sa retail] P56. Hindi pa na uubos yan,” Laurel told reporters on the sidelines of an agriculture forum in Makati City on Thursday.

The Agriculture Secretary was expecting these stocks to decline by mid-October.

“Siguro makuha natin at least less P5 [ang retail prices] by January,” Laurel said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/27/rice-importers-pocketed-over-%e2%82%b15b-from-tariff-cuts/>

# **The Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council needs someone with proven track record**

Dr. Jesus Lim Arranza  
September 27, 2024

September 26, 2024 marked another important milestone in the country's quest to end smuggling and other forms of illicit trade, with President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. signing the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act on this day.

Once it becomes effective, agricultural smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, cartel and financing of these illicit trade practices will be classified as acts of economic sabotage, making them non-bailable offenses that carry penalties of life imprisonment and a fine of five times the value of agricultural and fishery products involved in the crime.

Meanwhile, those that will be found to have aided the commission of agricultural economic sabotage, including the transport and storage of the smuggled goods, shall be penalized with 20 to 30 years imprisonment and a fine of thrice the value of the subject agricultural and fishery products.

Overseeing the implementation of the law is the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council to be chaired by the President or his designated permanent representative. Its members will be composed of 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. There will also be representatives from the private sector.

Indeed, this gives more teeth to the pronouncement of President Marcos in his first State of the Nation Address: "Bilang na ang mga araw ng mga smuggler."

With smuggling, hoarding, and profiteering in check, we see a ripple of benefits that can be felt by our agriculture sector and, ultimately, the Filipino people. The law will

serve as a catalyst for robust growth in the country's farm output, in the process boosting food supply and reducing prices.

However, as in other laws, implementation will make or break the lofty promises of this measure.

This is why, as early as now, I am appealing to the President to make sure that the one he will appoint to head the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council already has a proven track record in fighting smuggling and other illicit trade without letup and independent of influence-peddlers.

I did a quick check of the people now serving the present administration or particularly in Malacanang to see if the President already has someone who ticks all the boxes and can immediately hit the ground running once appointed head of the council.

Fortunately, there is one official in Malacanang who has the track record, curriculum vitae, character and values fit for the job.

Out of respect for that person or so as not to surprise or unduly put him in the spotlight, I'm opting not to mention his name here. But this Malacanang official, for several years, worked hand in hand with the Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI) including other private sector associations to combat smuggling, during his stint in Customs under the Anti-Smuggling Program sponsored by the USAid.

Various industry groups have witnessed how he works – from the apprehension and investigation of smuggling cases to the actual operation, case profiling, case-building, and all the way to the prosecution and conviction.

We worked together in a high profile case involving technical smuggling of P90 million worth of reinforced steel bars, which resulted in the conviction of four individuals before the Court of Tax Appeals in 2017 and was affirmed by the Supreme Court in 2019. We also looked into the illegal entry of goods through Subic, fought against smugglers of ceramic tiles, and campaigned hard against the illegal shipments of rice and other agri products such as sugar, fish, pork, chicken MDM, onions, etc..



This official, a product of USAid, was never deterred by “padrinos” or relationships with influential people, and his resolve to curb smuggling was never affected by people or groups who attempted to besmirch his good name.

I’ve been fighting smuggling and other forms of illicit trade for more than five decades already, he is one of a few persons in government wh—I should say—inspired me to continue this long and hard battle, personally seeing his patience and desire to help the local industries and the farmers being harshly affected by rampant smuggling activities.

For sure, some would discredit him, because this official, as far as I can remember, has filed hundreds of criminal cases against around 600 individuals involved in smuggling activities.

With him at the helm of the soon-to-be-created Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council, we at the FPI and Fight Illicit Trade will again be emboldened and inspired further, as if we received another shot in the arm, just like how we felt when President BBM made his strong policy pronouncement against smugglers and hoarders.

Dr. Jesus Lim Arranza is the chairman of the Federation of Philippine Industries and Fight Illicit Trade; a broad-based, multisectoral movement intended to protect consumers, safeguard government revenues and shield legitimate industries from the ill effects of smuggling.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/27/the-anti-agricultural-economic-sabotage-council-needs-someone-with-proven-track-record/>

**ABANTE TONITE**

# **523 container ng imported bigas ipakalat na- Speaker Romualdez**

September 26, 2024

Umapela si House Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez sa mga importer ng 523 containers ng imported rice na nakatengga sa yarda ng Manila International Container Port (MICP) ng Bureau of Customs (BoC) na agad ipakalat ang mga ito sa mga pamilihan upang makatulong sa pagpapababa ng presyo ng bigas.

Ang apela ay ginawa ni Speaker Romualdez matapos na pangunahan ang on-site inspection sa MICP nitong Miyerkules ng hapon, kasunod na rin ng mga ulat na mahigit 800 containers o aabot sa 23 million kilos ng imported na bigas ang nakatengga ng matagal sa nasabing port.

Kasama ni Speaker sa pag-iinspeksiyon sina House Deputy Majority Leader Erwin Tulfo at ACT-CIS partylist Rep. Edvic Yap at mga opisyal ng BOC sa pamumuno ni Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio.

Ayon kay Romualdez, “Parang hoarding din ito pero ginagamit ang facilities ng gobyerno, dahil mas mura dito.”

Panawagan pa niya sa mga importers, “Magtulungan na lang tayo imbes na mag-isip kayo na tataas yung profit ninyo at the expense ng ating consumers.”

Batay sa record ng BoC nasa 523 containers ng imported rice ang kasalukuyang nakatengga sa MICP na nagkakahalaga ng P750, 000 kada container.

Nagsagawa ng pagbisita si Romualdez sa MICP dahil na rin sa patuloy na reklamo ng ricek shortage sa kaniyang mga market visit nitong mga nagdaang araw.

Sinabi pa ni Romualdez na tila sinasamantala ng ilang mga importer ang reglementary period sa BoC bago nila ilabas ang kanilang mga bigas dito.

Ang naturang inspeksyon sa BoC ay bahagi pa rin ng tuloy-tuloy na kampanya ng House of Representatives para masawata ang rice hoarding at smuggling sa

bansa, para masiguro ang murang bigas sa merkado na siyang pangunahing layunin ng administrasyon ni Pangulong Marcos upang masiguro ang maayos na food supply sa bansa.

Nanawagan pa si Romualdez na agad ipalabas ang mga rice containers at masigurong panagutin ang mapapatunayang nagho-hoarding ng mga bigas.

“We are here to send a clear message: rice hoarding, smuggling, and other illegal activities that threaten the accessibility and affordability of our staple grain will not be tolerated,” anang lider ng 300-plus strong House of Representatives.

Idinagdag pa ni Speaker na ang ulat ng mga overstaying na rice containers ay dumagdag pa sa alalahanin ng pamahalaan ukol sa manipulasyon ng supply ng bigas sa merkado.

Nanawagan si Romualdez sa mga importer na tigilan na ang pagsasamantalan sa 30-day reglementary period sa BoC bago nila ilabas ang bigas sa merkado dahil maliwanag umano na hoarding na rin ito.

Ayon sa Section 1129(d) ng Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, ang mga shipment ay dapat makuha sa loob ng 30 days at dapat ay maayos na ang mga buwi at iba pang payment duties.

Matatandaan na kamakailan ay pinangunahan din ni Speaker Romualdez ang serye ng surprise inspection sa mga warehouse ng bigas sa Bulacan matapos ang balita ng hoarding ng bigas.

Siniguro naman ng BoC na agad silang tatalima sa panawagan ni Speaker.

Idinagdag pa ng BoC na ang mga kargamento na mamamatunayang lumampas sa 30-day reglementary period ay idedeklarang abandonado at pwedeng kumpiskahin ng ahensya at pwedeng ipamahagi sa mga sangay ng pamahalaan partikular sa DSWD para ipamahagi sa mahihirap.

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/09/26/523-container-ng-imported-bigas-ipakalat-na-speaker-romualdez/>

# Romualdez: Pagtengga ng mga bigas sa pantalan, parang hoarding na rin

Joy Cantos

September 27, 2024 | 12:00am



Officials of the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), led by its General Manager Jay Daniel Santiago, show the stockpiles of rice inside the containers during an inspection tour at a warehouse in Port Area, Manila on September 19, 2024

STAR/Ryan Baldemor

MANILA, Philippines — Nanawagan si House Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez sa mga importer ng 523 containers ng imported rice na nakatengga sa yarda ng Manila International Container Port (MICP) ng Bureau of Customs (BoC) na agad ipakalat ang mga ito sa merkado para makatulong sa pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas.

“Parang hoarding din ito pero ginagamit ang facilities ng gobyerno, dahil mas mura dito,” ani Romualdez nitong Miyerkules.

Pinangunahan ni Romualdez ang on-site inspection sa MICP nitong Miyerkules ng hapon matapos ang ulat na mahigit 800 containers o aabot sa 23 million kilos ng imported na bigas ang nakatengga ng matagal sa nasabing port. Kasama ni Speaker di House Deputy Majority Leader Erwin Tulfo at ACT-CIS partylist Rep. Edvic Yap at mga opisyal ng BoC sa pamumuno ni Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio.

Sa record ng BoC nasa 523 containers ng imported rice ang kasalukuyang nakatengga sa MICP na nagkakahalaga ng P750, 000 kada container.

Nagsagawa ng pagbisita si Romualdez sa MICP dahil na rin sa patuloy na reklamo ng rice shortage sa kaniyang mga market visit nitong mga nagdaang araw.

Sinabi pa ni Romualdez na tila sinasamantala ng ilang mga importer ang 30-day reglementary period sa BoC bago nila ilabas ang kanilang mga bigas sa merkado.

Ang naturang inspeksyon sa BoC ay bahagi pa rin ng tuluy-tuloy na kampanya ng House of Representatives para masawata ang rice hoarding at smuggling sa bansa, para masiguro ang murang bigas sa merkado na siyang pangunahing layunin ng administrasyon ni Pangulong Marcos upang masiguro ang maayos na food supply sa bansa.

“We are here to send a clear message: rice hoarding, smuggling, and other illegal activities that threaten the accessibility and affordability of our staple grain will not be tolerated,” sabi ni Romualdez.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/09/27/2388316/romualdez-pagtengga-ng-mga-big-as-sa-pantalan-parang-hoarding-na-rin>