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MANILA BULLETIN:

Inflation drop reflects government's effective interventions—Recto

BY MANILA BULLETIN

Sep 5, 2024 04:53 PM

President Marcos' chief economic manager emphasized the effectiveness of the government's interventions in stabilizing food prices and assured that efforts to manage risks will continue to keep prices low.

In a statement, Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto said that they will continue to enhance current government initiatives in the coming months to further slow the rate of increase in consumer prices.

He emphasized that such actions will greatly benefit everyday Filipinos, businesses, and the broader economy.

“We will not be complacent. While we are now seeing the positive results of our measures, we are proactively monitoring potential inflationary risks to address them in a timely and targeted manner,” Recto said.

The August inflation rate of 3.3 percent aligned with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' forecast and falls below private analysts' estimates, ensuring that the year-to-date average remains within the government's target range of three percent to four percent.

The significant decline in August inflation was driven by slower price increases for food and non-alcoholic beverages, a decline in transport costs, and notably reduced rice inflation due to lower tariffs and increased imports.

Additionally, core inflation decreased to 2.6 percent in August from 2.9 percent the previous month, showing ongoing price deceleration in non-volatile items.

This reduction in both headline and core inflation justifies the BSP's decision to lower interest rates by 25 basis points in August.

Inflation also slowed down across multiple sectors, providing relief to both the National Capital Region (NCR) and other regions, including the bottom 30 percent of income households.

Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture (DA) is intensifying its efforts to implement specific measures that will protect farmers' welfare and ensure the country's food security.

The government is extending and increasing the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) until 2030 to help local rice production and farmers.

The DA is expanding the KADIWA ng Pangulo (KNP) program to Visayas and Mindanao with 60 new stores offering affordable agricultural products, including rice priced at PHP 29 per kilo.

They are also providing ASF vaccines for small swine farmers, improving water management in anticipation of La Niña, and addressing non-food inflation through staggered electricity rate hikes. (**Derco Rosal**)

https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/5/inflation-drop-reflects-government-s-effective-interventions-recto#google_vignette

MANILA BULLETIN:

Sandigan junks dismissal of graft, falsification charges filed vs ex-DA official

BY CZARINA NICOLE ONG KI

Sep 5, 2024 02:20 PM

The Sandiganbayan has denied the motion to dismiss the graft and falsification charges filed against former Department of Agriculture (DA) assistant secretary for consumer affairs Kristine Y. Evangelista for alleged irregularity in the Kadiwa Food Hub.

Evangelista has been charged before the anti-graft court with one count of violation of Section 3(e) of Republic Act No. 3019, Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, and one count of falsification under Article 172 of the Revised Penal Code (RPC).

The charges arose from the alleged irregular procurement of 8,845 bags of onions worth P132,993,420 from Bonena Multi-Purpose Cooperative (BMC) from December 2022 to January 2023 under the DA's Food Mobilization project or the Kadiwa Food Hub.

The prosecution claimed there was a "questionable" advance payment of 50 percent made by FTI, a government owned and controlled corporation, to BMC despite its "doubtful deliveries." Evangelista challenged the validity of the charges against her as she pointed out that charge for graft do not constitute an offense. She also said that the falsification charge does not conform with the prescribed form. She told the court that "for the Information to be sufficient, it must so state such means, methods, and forms in a manner that would enable a person of common understanding to know what offense was intended to be charged."

However, the anti-graft court found her arguments "untenable" and denied her motion to quash. "An examination of the assailed Information discloses the essential details that, under the rules and pursuant to jurisprudence, make it sufficient and valid," the court said.

"In sum, the Court finds Evangelista's motion to quash the Informations in these cases unmeritorious," it ruled.

The 16-page resolution dated Aug. 30 was written by Associate Justice Maryann E. Corpus-Manalac with the concurrence of Fifth Division Chairperson Associate Justice Rafael R. Lagos and Associate Justice Kevin Narce B. Vivero. Other persons charged over the Kadiwa Food Hub "irregularities" were FTI Vice President for Operations John Gabriel Benedict C. Trinidad III, Warehouse Supervisor Benedict P. Libres, Warehouse Staff Marlon S. Pagsisihan, private individual and BMC President Israel C. Reguyal, as well as BMC drivers Jocelyn Jane, Rossul Batdhay, Romy Jimeno, Charlito Ylanan, Francisco V. Lapanan III, Arnold Osorio, Angelo Lajom, Randy Santos, Erickson Cortez, Ruben Bautista, Randy Santos, Erickson Cortez, Ruben Bautista, Vince Lorenzo, Windell Glenn A. Canaan, and AJ Bamala.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/5/sandigan-junks-dismissal-of-graft-falsification-charges-filed-vs-ex-da-official>

MANILA BULLETIN:

PSA: Reduced rice tariffs start to lower food inflation

BY GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG

Sep 5, 2024 12:52 PM

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that the government's decision to lower rice import tariffs is starting to affect consumer prices.

In a briefing, National Statistician and PSA Undersecretary Claire Dennis S. Mapa said the tariff reduction significantly contributed to the slowdown in food inflation, which fell to 4.2 percent in August from 6.7 percent the previous month.

This August figure is also an improvement compared to 8.2 percent in the same month last year.

Mapa attributed this decline primarily to the substantial drop in rice inflation, which slowed to 14.7 percent in August from 20.9 percent in July.

The PSA further noted that the rice inflation during yearend 2023 was already at an alarming high of 19.6 percent.

Mapa said that government interventions, particularly the reduced tariff rates, have favorably affected recent PSA data.

"It prevented the hike in rice prices, and it's now slowing down," he said.

Mapa also hoped that commodity prices, specifically rice prices, would continue to go down this month and next while stating that the PSA would continue to monitor any possible changes brought by the reduction.

The tariff for imported rice has been cut from 35 percent to 15 percent, as per Executive Order 62, which President Marcos signed last June.

The retail price for the imported regular milled rice according to the Department of Agriculture (DA) is at around P47 to P50 per kilo, while the well-milled rice is at P47 to P55 per kilo.

Imported special rice per kilo is at P55 to P65.

Meanwhile, there was a year-on-year inflation drop for vegetables, tubers, plantains, cooking bananas as well as pulses from 6.1 percent to 4.3 percent.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/5/psa-reduced-rice-tariffs-start-to-lower-food-inflation-1>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Private Sector Advisory Council recognized with Bayaniyugan Gabay Award at COINS Awards Night 2024

BY MANILA BULLETIN

Sep 5, 2024 03:05 PM



The Private Sector Advisory Council, represented by Noel Tempongko and Kartini Lim of Century Pacific Food Inc., has received the Bayaniyugan Gabay Award from the Philippine Coconut Authority at the COINS Awards Night 2024 for its contributions to sustainable practices and the empowerment of coconut farmers.

The Private Sector Advisory Council (PSAC) was honored with the prestigious Bayaniyugan Gabay Award by the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) during the Coconut Industry Sustainability (COINS) Awards Night, the closing event of National Coconut Week 2024 last August 30. This award recognizes PSAC's unwavering support for sustainable practices, its efforts to empower coconut farmers, and its contributions to the growth of the coconut industry. As a key advisory body to the President of the Philippines, PSAC has provided expert guidance and advocated for sustainable practices that significantly contribute to the achievement of the nation's economic objectives, particularly in the coconut sector. Its collaborative efforts have empowered coconut farmers, strengthened the industry's resilience, and ensured its continued growth and global competitiveness.

PSAC has been at the forefront of driving transformational change within the coconut sector. Through its collaborative approach, the Council has supported innovative policies and

programs that promote sustainable farming practices, enhance the welfare of coconut farmers, and reinforce the sector's resilience in the face of global challenges.

Noel Tempongko, vice president and general manager of the Coconut Processing & Exports Division of Century Pacific Food, Inc., and a PSAC member representing the Agriculture Sector, accepted the award on behalf of PSAC and expressed his appreciation:

“I humbly accept the Bayaniyugan Gabay Award on behalf of the Private Sector Advisory Council — Agri Sector. This recognition from the Philippine Coconut Authority is a great honor, one that truly belongs to everyone who has dedicated their efforts to advancing our coconut industry.”

Tempongko emphasized the importance of partnership and collaboration. “This award highlights the strong partnership between the government and the private sector in creating sustainable solutions for the coconut industry and improving the lives of our coconut farmers.” He also highlighted key initiatives supported by PSAC, such as a large-scale replanting program and fertilizer distribution, which are vital to revitalizing the coconut industry:

“The program to plant 100 million coconut trees over the next five years is not just about boosting farm productivity; it is about giving hope and a better future to our coconut farmers and their families. The widescale fertilization program for 55 million trees will also support the coconut sector and help revive our local salt industry.”

The COINS Awards Night celebrates individuals and organizations committed to advancing the coconut industry. This year’s event underscored the importance of cooperation between the public and private sectors to secure a sustainable future for this vital industry.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/5/private-sector-advisory-council-recognized-with-bayaniyugan-gabay-award-at-coins-awards-night-2024>

MANILA BULLETIN:

1,500 additional fish fingerlings released in Iloilo River

BY TARA YAP

Sep 5, 2024 11:41 AM

ILOILO CITY — An additional 1,500 fish fingerlings were released recently in the Iloilo River by MORE Electric and Power Corp. (MORE Power).



THE release of sea bass fingerlings in the Iloilo River was part of the corporate social responsibility program of MORE Power in Iloilo City. (MORE Power)

ADVERTISEMENT

The corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity was in partnership with the Iloilo City government to sustain the river's revival.

The Iloilo River was once considered dying, but was breathed new life when former Ilonggo Sen. Franklin Drilon initiated a program during the 2010s.

The release of bulgan (sea bass) fingerlings by MORE Power was seen as an important support from the private sector.

“This is not only important to the city, but its people,” said Bernard Rendaje of the Fisheries Sector of the Iloilo City Agriculture Office.

The release was lauded by a group of Ilonggos who are into long-line fishing as their hobby.

Carmelo Clemente said this is beneficial to enthusiasts like him who can have more opportunity to catch sea bass in the river.

The city government appealed that only mature fish should be caught, not those in production stage, to enable the species to reproduce in the river.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/5/1-500-additional-fish-fingerlings-released-in-iloilo-river>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Tariff cuts to further cool inflation – DOF

[Louise Maureen Simeon](#) - The Philippine Star

September 6, 2024 | 12:00am



In a statement following the 3.3 percent inflation in August, Finance Secretary Ralph Recto said the slowdown in headline rate was due to the government's interventions to stabilize food prices.

Walter Bollozos / The Philippine STAR

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Finance (DOF) expects inflation to ease further in the coming months as the impact of the rice tariff cut becomes more pronounced.

In a statement following the 3.3 percent inflation in August, Finance Secretary Ralph Recto said the slowdown in headline rate was due to the government's interventions to stabilize food prices.

Inflation cooled to 3.3 percent last month from 4.4 percent in July due to cheaper food, non-alcoholic beverages and transport costs.

In particular, rice inflation slowed to 14.7 percent from almost 21 percent as the impact of the reduced rice tariff rate policy started to take effect.

Executive Order 62 slashed the rice tariff to 15 percent from 35 percent in a bid to tame inflation.

Recto said the lower rice tariffs are already showing results, with imports growing by 77 percent in August, resulting in lower rice inflation.

“We expect rice prices to drop more noticeably in September as the rice imported at lower tariffs in August reaches the local market,” Recto said.

“We will not be complacent. While we are now seeing the positive results of our measures, we are proactively monitoring potential inflationary risks to address them in a timely and targeted manner,” he said.

Recto maintained that the sustained drop in inflation would boost household consumption for the rest of the year and encourage more investments, particularly as borrowing costs decrease.

Further, the DOF noted that other concerned government agencies are stepping up efforts to implement targeted measures.

For one, the Department of Agriculture (DA) extended the required ship-out date for imported rice to 60 days from 30 days.

This gives local importers more time to secure better rates amid price volatility and helps lower retail prices by reducing landed costs.

The DA will also expand its Kadiwa program to Visayas and Mindanao, provide vaccines against African swine fever and initiate water management in anticipation of La Nina.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/09/06/2383130/tariff-cuts-further-cool-inflation-dof>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Inflation falls to 7-month low

[Louella Desiderio](#) - The Philippine Star

September 6, 2024 | 12:00am



National Statistician Dennis Mapa said in a press conference yesterday that headline inflation, or the rate of increase in average prices of consumer goods and services, slowed to 3.3 percent in August this year from 4.4 percent in July and 5.3 percent in August 2023.

Philstar.com / Jovannie Lambayan

At 3.3% print, returns within BSP's target band

MANILA, Philippines — Overall inflation eased to a seven-month low in August due mainly to the slower increase in food prices, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

National Statistician Dennis Mapa said in a press conference yesterday that headline inflation, or the rate of increase in average prices of consumer goods and services, slowed to 3.3 percent in August this year from 4.4 percent in July and 5.3 percent in August 2023.

This is the slowest since the 2.8 percent inflation print in January this year.

The August inflation is also within the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' forecast range of 3.2 to four percent for the month and falls back to the three to four percent target band for the year.

Driving the downward trend in inflation was the slower annual increment of food and non-alcoholic beverages at 3.9 percent in August from the previous month's 6.4 percent.

Food inflation eased to 4.2 percent in August from 6.7 percent in July.

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) attributed the lower food inflation largely to the significant slowdown in rice inflation, which decreased to 14.7 percent in August from 20.9 percent in July.



Mapa said this was the slowest inflation for rice since the 13.2 percent in October last year.

He said the slower rice inflation in August was in line with expectations, citing base effects and the impact of the lower tariffs on rice imports.

Mapa said the average prices of the three varieties being tracked by the PSA also declined in August from their levels in July.

In particular, the average price of regular milled rice declined to P50.66 per kilo in August from P50.90 per kilo in July. For well-milled rice, the average price also decreased to P55.56 per kilo in August from the previous month's P55.85 per kilo, while the average price for special rice dropped to P64.08 per kilo in August from P64.42 kilo in July.

“This month of September, (rice inflation) will further go down to single digit because of base effect,” Mapa said.

The PSA hopes to see bigger drops in rice prices this month and in October, he said.

Also cited as a main driver of the slower headline inflation was the transport commodity group, which posted a 0.2 percent drop in August from a 3.6 percent increase in July.

In the January to August period, inflation averaged 3.6 percent, within the government's two to four percent target range for the year.

"There are factors, there are items that are going up, some are going down. But overall, for now, the direction is that (headline inflation) will go down, except if we have some surprises this month of September," Mapa said.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. chief economist Michael Ricafort said it is possible for the inflation level to be sustained at three percent for the rest of the year.

"However, there could still be spillover effects on inflation by the storm or flood damage by Typhoon Enteng and the recent habagat," he said in an email.

While potential pressures could emerge from higher electricity rates and above-normal weather disturbances, NEDA Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said the government is prepared to address these.

"Preparations to counter the effects of the La Niña phenomenon are underway, including improvements in early warning systems, the utilization of communication systems to issue warnings about dam openings, measures to address the potential accelerated speed of livestock diseases and greater involvement of local government units in information dissemination are in progress. Notably, the government has allocated P15 billion for national risk reduction in 2024," he said.

Measures to ensure steady inflation include the expansion of the Department of Agriculture's Kadiwa ng Pangulo program in the Visayas and Mindanao to enhance access to affordable agricultural products, and the collaboration with food manufacturers to supply Kadiwa stores with essential goods, including canned sardines, cooking oil, condiments, fresh fish and poultry.

To promote greater reliability and more affordable electricity, the NEDA is urging the Energy Regulatory Commission to expedite the full implementation of the lower retail competition and open access threshold.

"The government will continue to implement measures to reduce further inflationary pressures, including enhancing agricultural productivity, expanding logistics infrastructure and ensuring the efficient delivery of social services. These efforts are crucial not only for stabilizing prices, but also for ensuring that economic growth translates into tangible improvements in the lives of all Filipinos," Balisacan said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/09/06/2383139/inflation-falls-7-month-low>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Complaint filed vs 12 in onion ‘cartel’

[Louella Desiderio](#) - The Philippine Star

September 6, 2024 | 12:00am



Onions Porters pull a sackload of imported red onions to be delivered at the different stalls at the vegetable section in the city market.

The STAR / Andy G. Zapata Jr.

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) has filed charges against 12 vegetable traders for engaging in anti-competitive agreements in the supply of imported onions.

If found guilty, the traders could be fined a total of P2.4 billion.

In a press conference yesterday, PCC Enforcement Office director Christian Loren delos Santos said his office filed an administrative case before the commission against onion importers and traders for violating Section 14 of the Philippine Competition Act, which prohibits agreements between competitors that restrict or reduce market competition.

Named in the Statement of Objection are Philippine Vieva Group of Companies (Phil. Vieva Group), Tian Long Corp., La Reina Fresh Vegetables & Young Indoor Plants, Yom Trading Corp., Vegetable Importers, Exporters & Vendors Association of the Philippines (VIEVA Phils.) and Golden Shine International Freight Forwarders.

Also named as individual respondents are Lilia Cruz as vice president of Phil. Vieva Group, chairperson and president of Golden Shine and chairperson of VIEVA Phils.;

Eric Pabilona as board member of Phil. Vieva Group, corporate executive officer of Golden Shine and corporate secretary of Tian Long; Renato Francisco Jr. as board member of Phil. Vieva Group, president of La Reina and chairman and president of Yom Trading; Letty Baculando, board member of Phil. Vieva Group and incorporator of Golden Shine; Mark Castro Ocampo, sole proprietor of Vegefru Producing Store; and Nancy Callanta Rosal, sole proprietor of Rosal Fruit and Vegetable Trading.

Delos Santos said the traders engaged in cartel-like behavior as they divided among themselves the volume of onion allowed to be imported by assigning among themselves the sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSIC) issued by the Bureau of Plant Industry.

He said the traders also exchanged sensitive business information like the price, suppliers, customers, volume, shipping, distribution and storage.

“So, by agreeing to allocate SPSICs and divide among themselves the actual volume of imports, respondents effectively controlled more than 50 percent of the volume of onions imported into the Philippines during the relevant period,” Delos Santos said, referring to the years 2019 to 2023 when the price of onions hit as high as P700 per kilogram.

“This case marks a milestone for competition law enforcement in the Philippines as this is the first time a ‘dawn raid’ was conducted,” Delos Santos said, referring to the administrative search and inspection where the PCC collected voluminous documents, records and electronic data related to the companies’ trading activities.

Delos Santos said the case is also significant as it involves the largest recommended fine by the PCC amounting to approximately P2.4 billion.

Under the Philippine Competition Act, entities found to have engaged in anti-competitive agreements may be fined at least P110 million. If a violation involves a basic necessity or prime commodity like onion, the fine may be tripled.

Upon receipt of the statement of objection, PCC will hear the case in the exercise of its power as a quasi-judicial agency.

“With the filing of this case, the Enforcement Office reiterates its commitment to upholding fair market competition and to ensure that consumers are protected from the harms of anti-competitive practices. We believe that if there is competition, consumers are the winners,” Delos Santos said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel welcomed the filing of charges.

“I’m happy with the decision of PCC. It should be a sign to all smugglers and unscrupulous traders that we will go after all of them,” he said in a statement. “We can’t allow a few individuals, driven by an insatiable lust for money, to exploit our farmers and consumers or, worse, sabotage our economy.”

Laurel said that they are looking at possible blacklisting, as well as the withdrawal of accreditation of facilities used by the traders.

Department of Agriculture (DA) spokesperson Arnel de Mesa said the traders would not be allowed to take part in any onion importation even if their permits are still valid until next year.

He added that going after cartel operations and smugglers will help stabilize the supply and price of onions in the country.

Meanwhile, the Sandiganbayan has affirmed the validity of the graft and falsification charges the Office of the Ombudsman filed against dismissed DA assistant secretary Kristine Evangelista, other DA officials and Food Terminal Inc. officers in connection with the alleged profiteering and price manipulation of onions in 2022.

In a 16-page resolution promulgated on Aug. 30, the court’s Special Fifth Division denied Evangelista’s bid to dismiss the cases through a motion to quash.

The court found no merit in Evangelista’s argument that the ombudsman’s prosecution team failed to allege in the charge sheets her specific acts that constitute the commission of the alleged crimes nor her supposed conspiracy with the other accused officials. – **Romina Cabrera, Elizabeth Marcelo**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/09/06/2383223/complaint-filed-vs-12-onion-cartel>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

12 ‘onion cartel’ members bared, face P2.4-B fines

By: [Alden M. Monzon](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:34 AM September 06, 2024



Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr.—INQUIRER PHOTO / RICHARD A. REYES

MANILA, Philippines — The Enforcement Office of the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) on Thursday said it had filed charges and recommended penalties totaling P2.42 billion against 12 onion traders and importers for allegedly acting as a cartel since 2019.

Based on a July 9 “statement of objections” filed by the office for the PCC commissioners’ decision, the traders were accused of violating the anticartel provision of the Philippine Competition Act (PCA).

Once approved, it will be the biggest amount of fines in the antitrust body’s history.

The respondents include Philippine Vieva Group of Companies Inc., Tian Long Corp., La Reina Fresh Vegetables and Young Indoor Plants Inc., Yom Trading Corp., Vegetable Importers, Exporters and Vendors Association of the Philippines, and Golden Shine International Freight Forwarders Corp.

The individual respondents are Vieva vice president and Golden Shine president Lilia Cruz; Vieva board member, Golden Shine corporate executive officer and Tian Long corporate secretary Eric Pabilona; Vieva board member, La Reina president and Yom Trading chair and president Renato Francisco Jr.

Also among those charged are Vieva board member and Golden Shine incorporator Letty Baculando, as well as Vegefru Producing Store proprietor Mark Castro Ocampo and Rosal Fruit and Vegetable Trading owner Nancy Callanta Rosal.

Collusion

The enforcement unit said these firms and individuals, collectively referred to in previous congressional hearings as the “onion cartel,” allocated the supply of imported onions by assigning among themselves the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearances (SPSICs) issued by the Department of Agriculture (DA) in violation of the anticompetition law.

An SPSIC is an import requirement by the government to ensure that agricultural products follow existing standards to protect the health of humans, plants and animals, as well as prevent the spread of diseases or pests.

The PCC said the importers and traders also divided among themselves the volume of onions allowed to be imported.

“So, by agreeing to allocate SPSICs and divide among themselves the actual volume of imports, respondents effectively controlled more than 50 percent of the volume of onions imported into the Philippines,” said lawyer Christian Loren de los Santos, the director of the PCC’s enforcement office.

“This agreement leads to lower supply, higher prices, poorer quality and less innovation, which harm consumers, businesses and the economy in general,” he said.

Info exchange

De los Santos also noted that these companies and individuals colluded to lessen competition by exchanging sensitive business information, such as price, suppliers, customers, volume, shipping, distribution and storage.

“With this scheme, respondents avoided competing with each other. They did not independently decide their policies, but have substituted the risk of competition with cooperation,” the PCC official said.

He said the pieces of evidence were collected during a raid back in September 2023, where the PCC collected “voluminous documents,” records, and electronic data related to the companies’ trading activities.

The respondents were found to have imported 28,916 metric tons of red onions and 47,639 MT of yellow onions from 2020 to 2021.

Under the PCA, businesses found to have taken advantage of the situation may be fined up to P100 million, and even face jail time of up to seven years.

The fines may even be tripled if trade of basic necessities, including agricultural products identified by the Price Act, are involved in cartel or abuse of dominance violations.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. welcomed the filing of the charges, adding that they will explore the possibility of blacklisting the companies and individuals involved and potentially withdrawing the accreditation of cold storage facilities whose owners were complicit in the scheme.

Economic sabotage

“We can’t allow a few individuals, driven by an insatiable lust for money, to exploit our farmers and consumers or, worse, sabotage our economy,” Laurel said.

“I’m happy with the decision of PCC. It should be a sign to all smugglers and unscrupulous traders that we will go after all of them,” he added.

In November 2022, the PCC started investigating the high prices of onion for possible cartel or abuse of dominance conduct, prompted by the congressional inquiry through House Resolution No. 681 filed by Marikina Rep. Stella Quimbo.

The PCC launched its market assessment after onion retail prices rose to an unusually high range, peaking at more than P700 a kilo in 2022.

As prices were expected to stabilize due to the imports approved by the government and the suggested retail price set by the Department of Trade and Industry, the PCC looked into the cause of the market anomaly in coordination with the DA and other law enforcement agencies.

[https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1980572/12-onion-cartel-members-bared-face-p2-4-b-fines?utm_source=\(direct\)&utm_medium=gallery](https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1980572/12-onion-cartel-members-bared-face-p2-4-b-fines?utm_source=(direct)&utm_medium=gallery)

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Inflation slowed to 3.3% in Aug, opens door for further rate cuts

By: [Ian Nicolas P. Cigaral](#), [Mariedel Irish U. Catilogo](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:30 AM September 06, 2024

Headline inflation in August eased to its slowest rate in seven months due to a more gradual increase in food and transport costs, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported on Thursday.

Preliminary data from the agency showed the consumer price index grew by 3.3 percent year on year in August, albeit slower from the 4.4 percent in July and 5.3 percent last year.

This falls within the lower-end of the 3.2- to 4-percent forecast of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) for the month, and lower compared to the 3.7 percent average inflation forecast in an Inquirer poll of 11 economists conducted last week.

Inflation print in August marked the slowest growth in seven months or since the 2.8 percent logged in January. Stripping out seasonality factors, month-on-month inflation fell by 0.1 percent in August.

For the first eight months, inflation averaged 3.6 percent, still lower from the 6.6 percent in August 2023. National statistician Dennis Mapa attributed the cooling inflation to the slower increase in food and nonalcoholic beverages and transport costs, primarily with rice which showed a significant decrease for the month. The major food staple accounted for one third of overall inflation.

Rice inflation eased to 14.7 percent from 20.9 percent a month ago. This was the slowest growth in 10 months or since 13.2 percent in October 2023.

“The rice inflation we have an expectation of course, we already said it would start to go down from July and August, it will start to go down significantly,” Mapa said during a press briefing, adding that he anticipates rice inflation will decrease to single-digit level in September.

Meanwhile, the heavily weighted food and nonalcoholic beverages index slowed to 3.9 percent from 6.4 percent in the previous month and 8.1 percent last year.

Food inflation alone cooled further to 4.2 percent in August from 6.7 percent in the previous month and 8.2 percent a year ago.

The decrease was also influenced by slower increases in transport costs, which fell by 0.2 percent compared to the previous growth of 3.6 percent. This was largely due to a drop in gasoline prices, which decreased by 5.8 percent compared to a previous growth of 5.4 percent, and a decline in diesel prices, which fell by 8.4 percent from a prior growth of 9.2 percent.

Robert Dan Roces, chief economist at Security Bank, said the slower inflation growth, especially in rice prices, suggests that the BSP's monetary decision and other factors are effective in curbing price hikes.

"This positive trend should lead to further interest rate cuts. However, global economic conditions particularly oil prices, and the full impact of the rice tariff could influence future inflation rates so these factors require monitoring," Roces said.

In a statement, the BSP said the softer inflation in August was "consistent" with its latest outlook that sees price growth going on a downward trend due to "easing supply pressures for key food items."

The central bank added that it will continue to take "a measured approach" in ensuring price stability after deciding to cut the policy rate by 25 basis points (bp) to 6.25 percent at the August meeting of the Monetary Board.

Miguel Chanco, economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, said the slower inflation in August would give the BSP more space to further slash borrowing costs.

"We continue to believe that the BSP will follow its August rate cut with another 25-bp reduction in October, before stepping up the pace of easing to 50-bp each time starting in December," Chanco said.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. was elated by the inflation slowdown and vowed to take more "concrete steps" to ensure food security and stable prices of goods so that the impact of the slower rise in the prices of basic goods will be felt by more Filipinos.

The Kadiwa ng Pangulo program of the Department of Agriculture, for example, will be further expanded in the Visayas and Mindanao.

The Kadiwa program provides farmers and fisherfolk with rent-free venues where they can sell their fresh produce directly to consumers without middlemen.

"This will help ensure that basic goods remain affordable for many Filipinos," the President said.

He also cited the controlled roll out of the African Swine Fever vaccine, which he said will "ensure a stable pork supply and avoid price hikes in the prices of pork."

"Our actions to promote a stable supply of transportation and gasoline also helped ease the burdens of our countrymen. These are concrete steps we're taking to make sure that the Bagong Pilipinas we promised is felt where it matters most – at home,"

Marcos said. — *with a report from Julie Aurelio*

<https://business.inquirer.net/478401/inflation-slowed-to-3-3-in-aug-opens-door-for-further-rate-cuts>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Quality jobs, cheap goods will give Filipinos comfortable lives – Marcos

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 12:32 PM September 05, 2024



The Department of Agriculture sells rice at P29 per kilo at the Bureau of Animal and Industry's Kadiwa in Visayas Avenue, Quezon City on Friday, July 19, 2024. (PNA)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday said “concrete steps” are already underway to ensure that the decline in inflation rate will be experienced by all Filipinos.

Marcos, who also chairs the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) board, made the pronouncement after the Philippine Statistics Authority reported that the country's inflation eased to 3.3 percent in August.

“Patuloy ang trabaho. Ipagpapatuloy natin ang pag-usad upang matiyak na makakamtan ng bawat Pilipino ang mas komportableng buhay — sa pamamagitan ng dekalidad na trabaho at murang bilingin,” he noted.

(The work continues. We will continue to make progress to ensure that every Filipino will have a more comfortable life — through quality jobs and cheap goods.)

Among these measures is the expansion of the Kadiwa centers which, he said, will help maintain the affordable price of commodities.

He also announced that government will begin the controlled rollout of the African Swine Fever vaccine so that there will be enough supply and a price hike will be avoided.

Furthermore, measures to stabilize transportation and fuel prices will be implemented.

“These are concrete steps we’re taking to make sure that the Bagong Pilipinas we promised is felt where it matters most — at home,” he said.

(These are concrete steps we’re taking to make sure that the Bagong Pilipinas we promised is felt where it matters most — at home.)

According to Marcos, apart from the inflation, the reduction of rice tariffs decreased rice inflation from 20.9 to 14.7 percent.

Meat inflation, on the other hand, was also brought down from 4.8 to 4 percent.

<https://business.inquirer.net/478354/quality-jobs-cheap-goods-will-give-filipinos-comfortable-lives-marcos>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

La Niña could boost local sugar production – SRA

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:53 PM September 05, 2024



INQUIRER.net stock images

The La Niña weather phenomenon could boost local sugar production depending on its timing, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said.

SRA administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said if the weather phenomenon occurs in the last quarter of this year as predicted, it will coincide with the period when sugarcanes have grown.

“It will increase the tonnage and hopefully, our sugarcanes will grow longer because it has enough water,” Azcona said. “With the rains coming, if La Niña comes, hopefully we can recover.”

However, the SRA chief said sugarcanes might not tiller (or produce shoots from the base of a sugarcane plant) “if it’s raining constantly.”

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) had projected that La Niña—characterized by above normal rainfall conditions—would most likely form between this month and November.

“Most climate models combined... suggest a 66 percent chance of La Niña forming in [September to November] and will likely persist until the first quarter of 2025,” Pagasa said in its monitoring earlier.

Based on the draft sugar order sent by the SRA, sugar output for crop year 2024-2025 could reach 1.78 million metric tons (MT) which, if attained, is 7.4 percent lower than 1.922 million MT of sugar produced in crop year 2023-2024.

The SRA attributed the lower estimate to “the anticipated negative effect of the prolonged El Niño phenomenon; unless the La Niña phenomenon brings about an increase in production.”

Azcona explained that local farmers were forced to replant their crops as sugarcanes dried up because of the El Niño-induced dry spell.

Given this, the SRA would allocate the entire production to “B” or solely for domestic consumption as it has done in previous crop years, as domestic output is insufficient to meet the demand for the sweetener.

The SRA head assured the public of a stable supply of sugar until the end of the milling season around May or June next year amid the projected decrease in output. Azcona said the SRA board already signed Sugar Order No. 1 governing the sugar policy for crop year 2024-2025 (Sept. 1 this year to Aug. 31, 2025) and is awaiting the Department of Agriculture’s approval.

The SRA earlier said the majority of mills were keen on delaying the start of the milling season supposedly to begin on Sept. 15 to improve cane maturity and increase volumes following the impact of the El Niño climate phenomenon on their harvest.

Azcona said most mills were willing to adjust their milling schedule to Oct. 1 and only First Farmers Holding Co. decided to begin milling on time.

Refined sugar was priced from P74 to P100 per kilogram as of Tuesday, lower than P85 to P110 a year ago, based on the DA’s price monitoring.

Brown sugar ranged from P65 to P90 per kg, also lower than P78 to P95 per kg previously.

<https://business.inquirer.net/478379/la-nina-could-boost-local-sugar-production-sra>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Agriculture in trade and industry

By: [Ernesto M. Ordoñez](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:12 AM September 06, 2024

Agriculture must be fully considered and supported by industry planners for genuine and inclusive economic development.

This was the conclusion at the Sept. 4 meeting of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and the House of Representatives' Committee on Trade and Industry. PCCI was led by its chair George Barcelon and president Eunina Mangio, while Iloilo 4th District Rep. Ferjenel Biron appeared for the committee.

At the meeting, there were more than 10 industry subsectors represented, one of which was from the food product subsector. According to data gathering firm Statista, in 2023, the largest manufacturing subsector was food products (P1.8 trillion). This was followed distantly by chemical and chemical products (P461 billion), and computer, electrical and optical products (P401.9 billion). Agriculture, which is the source of the food product subsector, clearly has a very significant role in manufacturing and industry.

From a larger perspective, the economic managers who largely influence our economic development are usually the secretaries of Socioeconomic Planning, Finance, and Trade and Industry. However, the Secretary of Agriculture has an equally important role.

For agriculture exports, for every dollar earned, more than 80 percent is value added from the Philippines. But for certain electronic exports, the local value added is less than 20 percent.

Reforms

Two PCCI agriculture resolutions were discussed that greatly affect industry. Both are related to two conditionalities proposed by the Agri-Fisheries Alliance (AFA) and identified in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) ratification document signed last Feb. 21, 2023.

The first was "Amendment of Agrarian Reform Law to increase the retention limit from 5 to 24 hectares, including the lifting of the agriculture land ownership ceiling to encourage more consolidated farming businesses."

We can never be globally competitive unless we have economies of scale. This is a requirement not only to compete against cheap imports, but also to enable us to export. In 2024, agriculture imports reached \$17.9 billion, while our exports hit just \$6.4 billion.

We must consider our new RCEP environment. From an overall view, rosy projections from that trade deal did not happen. From 2022 to 2023, our exports decreased from 41 percent to 36 percent while imports grew from 58 percent to 63 percent. Our foreign direct investments also decreased by 13 percent to \$7.5 billion. In this difficult trade environment, agriculture must get all the support it needs.

Monitoring

The second resolution was: “Urging the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Philippine Council of Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF) to constantly engage the private sector in regular dialogues/consultations in all commodities, issues, and program planning to ensure accountability and transparency in the use of government funds.”

This is directly related to an RCEP conditionality of private sector monitoring of DA funds. It is especially important following revelations from the Commission on Audit (COA) that one third of the DA’s expenses can’t be liquidated nor explained for three years starting 2020.

A separate study showed that from 2019 to 2022, 25 percent of the machines given by the DA to farmers were unutilized, while 10 percent were underutilized.

Agriculture Secretary Francis Tiu Laurel Jr. is now acting decisively, but private sector monitoring would be an effective preventive measure for this not to happen again.

Unfortunately, PCAF’s operation budget was previously cut in half, severely limiting its power to monitor. This year, the PCAF budget is P214.1 million, only 1/10 of 1 percent of the DA budget of P197.8 billion. This should be addressed in the 2025 purse.

I applaud Biron for giving importance to agriculture. To achieve a holistic and inclusive economic development, our legislature and executive branch must now do the same.

The author is Agriwatch chair, former secretary of presidential flagship programs and projects, and former undersecretary of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry. Contact is agriwatch_phil@yahoo.com

<https://business.inquirer.net/478408/agriculture-in-trade-and-industry>

BUSINESS WORLD:

PCC says 12 onion traders attempted to corner import market

September 5, 2024 | 9:18 pm



BOC

THE Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) said 12 onion traders sought to corner the import market in violation of competition law.

The traders imported 76,555 metric tons of red and yellow onion for a period between 2020 and 2021 by sharing out the import permits, known as sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSIC), among themselves, PCC Director Christian Loren B. Delos Santos, an enforcement officer at the regulator, said at a briefing.

“Respondents effectively controlled more than 50% of the volume of onions imported into the Philippines during the relevant period,” he added.

Mr. Delos Santos said red onion imports during the period amounted to 28,916 MT, with yellow onion imports totaling 47,639 MT.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel V. de Mesa said the volumes imported were significant.

“Our typical requirement is 22,000 MT per month for both red and yellow onion. That includes local production and imports. So if it’s at (70,000) plus that’s huge,” Mr. De Mesa told reporters at a separate briefing.

The PCC has charged the 12 traders with violating Republic Act 10667 or the Philippine Competition Act.

Businesses intending to import agricultural products are required to apply for SPSICs from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) for crops.

“They caused significant harm to consumers by engaging in coordinated anti-competitive conduct such as price-fixing, bid-raiding, output restrictions, and market allocation, the last being the case that we filed,” Mr. Delos Santos said.

The PCC recommended a total fine of P2.4 billion for anti-competitive behavior for all 12 importers.

He added that their actions led to lower supply, higher prices, and poorer quality of onions in the market.

Separately, Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said that the Department of Agriculture (DA) is looking to blacklist the 12 traders.

“In addition to the fines and legal charges, the DA will explore the possibility of blacklisting and withdrawing the accreditation of cold storage facilities whose owners were complicit in this scheme,” he said in a statement.

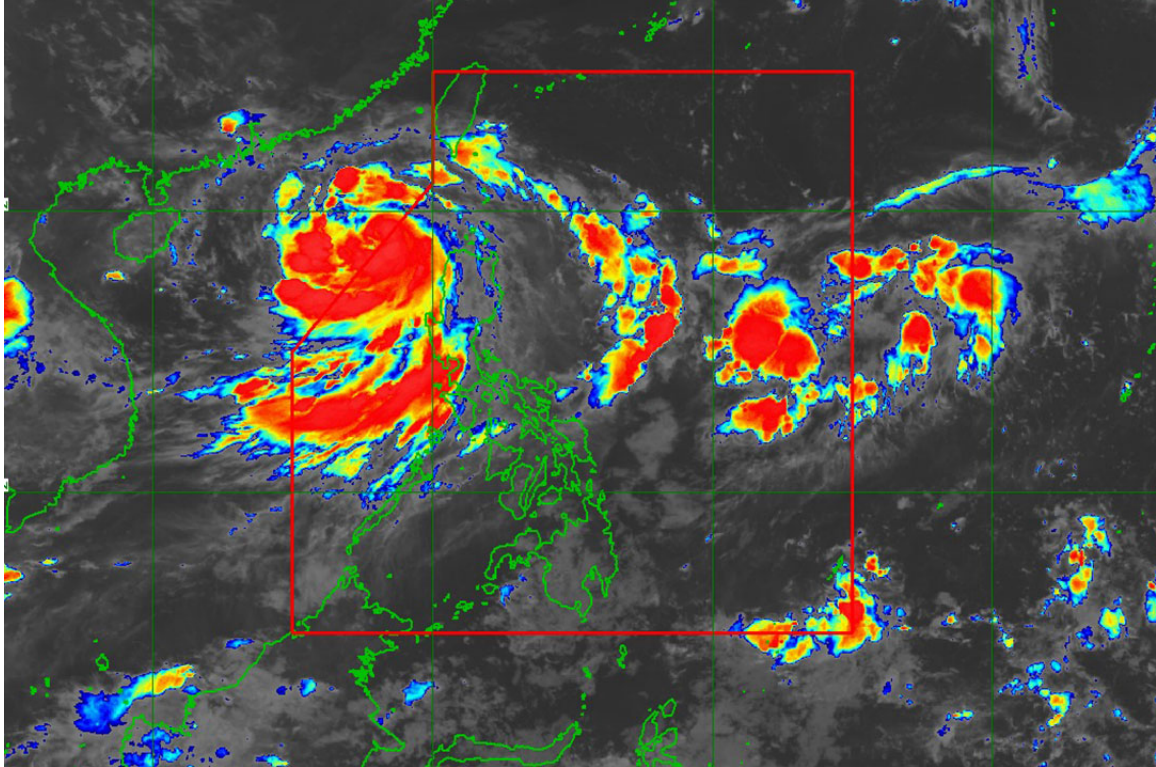
Mr. De Mesa added that the importers and traders will be barred from transacting with the BPI. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/05/618972/pcc-says-12-onion-traders-attempted-to-corner-import-market/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Agri damage from Enteng tops P360M

September 5, 2024 | 9:16 pm



PAGASA.DOST.GOV.PH

AGRICULTURAL damage caused by Severe Tropical Storm ENTENG (international name: Yagi) was estimated at P360.18 million, by the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In a bulletin, the DA said that according to initial estimates, the storm affected 14,605 farmers and fisherfolk.

Volume loss were reckoned at 15,205 metric tons (MT) across 9,245 hectares of farmland.

The rice crop sustained 94.4% of the total. Lost volume was estimated at 14,177 MT valued at P340.06 million, with the damage spanning 10,442 hectares.

“Most of the damage and losses was to rice in the reproductive and maturity stages,” the DA said.

Volume losses for corn amounted to 739 MT, valued at P14.01 million, affecting 361 hectares.

Damage to high-value crops totaled 200 MT, valued at P4.33 million. Cassava losses were 89 MT valued at P1.77 million.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel V. de Mesa said the single province sustaining the most damage was Camarines Sur with P342 million, followed by Catanduanes, Albay, Negros Occidental, Northern Samar, and Bulacan, Mr. De Mesa told reporters, citing provinces that have filed damage reports.

The DA is set to deploy P202.86 million worth of assistance in the form of seed, bio-control measures, and farm tools.

Funding from the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) and the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. are also available for affected farmers and fisherfolk.

The government weather service, known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), reported that Enteng left the Philippine Area of Responsibility on Wednesday. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/05/618969/agri-damage-from-enteng-tops-p360m/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

PHL inflation cools in boon for rate cuts

September 6, 2024 | 12:33 am



PHILIPPINE STAR/RYAN BALDEMOR

By **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**, *Reporter*

INFLATION SLOWED, as expected, to a seven-month low in August due to a moderate rise in food and a decline in transport costs, making the case for the Philippine central bank to deliver more interest rate cuts next quarter to boost economic growth.

Consumer prices rose by 3.3% from 4.4% in July and 5.3% a year earlier, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said on Thursday.

The increase was within the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' (BSP) 3.2-4% forecast for the month and below the 3.7% median estimate of 15 analysts in a *BusinessWorld* poll last week.

Declining inflation could justify further policy easing, Michael L. Ricafort, chief economist at Rizal Commercial Banking Corp., said in an e-mail.

“It is possible for inflation to sustain its 3% levels for the rest of 2024,” he said. “That could justify further BSP rate cuts that would match any future Federal Reserve rate cuts from 2024 to 2026.”

The Monetary Board cut benchmark interest rates by 25 basis points (bps) to 6.25% at its Aug. 15 meeting, the first cut in almost four years. BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. has signaled another 25-bp cut before the year ends.

In a note, Pantheon Macroeconomics said inflation risks “remain skewed to the downside, as the recent cut in rice tariffs has yet to have a meaningful impact on prices.”

But Chinabank Research noted that while rice prices could decline in the coming months, recent bad weather poses supply-side risks that could drive food prices up.

“Base effects will help push down inflation in September, which could help offset any potential upward price pressures from the typhoon and monsoon rains,” it said in a note.

August ended six straight months of acceleration, with inflation returning to the Philippine central bank’s 2-4% target.

Month on month, consumer prices declined by 1.1%. Stripping out seasonality factors, prices decreased by 0.1%.

Core inflation, which excludes volatile prices of food and fuel, slowed to 2.6% from 2.9% in July and 6.1% a year ago. Inflation averaged 3.6% in the first eight months of the year.

At a news briefing, National Statistician Claire Dennis S. Mapa said August inflation was mainly driven by the slower price increases in food and nonalcoholic beverages, which slowed to 3.9% from 6.4% in July.

It accounted for 69.9% of the overall inflation downtrend.

Also contributing to the downtrend was transport, with an annual drop of 0.2%. In August, pump price adjustments stood at a net decrease of P2.70 a liter for gasoline, P2.80 for diesel and P3.70 for kerosene.

Food inflation slowed to 4.2% from 6.7% in July, mostly due to the slower increases in the prices of rice at 14.7%. This was followed by vegetables, tubers, plantains, cooking bananas and pulses with a year-on-year decline of 4.3%.

The average price of a kilo of regular milled rice fell to P50.66 in August from P50.90 a month earlier, while well-milled rice prices declined to P55.56 from P55.85, PSA data showed.

MONITORING

RISKS

The PSA also reported faster annual declines in the indices of fish and other seafood at 3.1%, and sugar, confectionery and desserts at 3.8%.

Lower inflation rates were also noted in flour, bread and other bakery products, pasta products, and other cereals at 2.4%; meat and other parts of slaughtered land animals at 4%; and ready-made food and other food products not elsewhere classified at 5.5%.

On the other hand, inflation for housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels accelerated to 3.8% in August from 2.3% in July, mainly due to higher electricity prices.

“Our expectation is that it will increase until October,” Mr. Mapa said.

In a statement, Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto said the government “will not be complacent” with the latest inflation figures. “While we are now seeing the positive results of our measures, we are proactively monitoring potential inflationary risks to address them in a timely and targeted manner.”

The government is prepared to counter the impacts of La Niña on inflation, National Economic and Development Authority Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said in a separate statement.

These include improved early warning systems and the use of communication systems to warn about dam openings, as well as measures against the potential spread of livestock diseases, he added.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. vowed to put up more state-assisted farm-to-market outlets and speed up the rollout of swine vaccines to temper rising costs. In a statement, he attributed slowing inflation to lower rice tariffs.

Mr. Marcos said putting more stores under the state's Kadiwa program, which allows farmers to sell directly to consumers, in central and southern Philippines ensures prices would be affordable.

There were 265 regular Kadiwa stores nationwide and 119 Kadiwa pop-up stores that operate on a limited time as of May.

Mr. Marcos said the government would start the controlled rollout of African Swine Fever vaccines to ensure sufficient and affordable pork supply.

The President also said the government was exerting all efforts to ensure stable gasoline prices.

The Philippines was battered this week by heavy rains from Severe Tropical Storm Yagi and the southwest monsoon, with the Agriculture department estimating farm damage at P350.85 million. The agency said production losses hit 14,814 metric tons spanning 8,893 hectares of land. Rice accounted for P333.08 million of the total damage. — *with* **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2024/09/06/618942/phl-inflation-cools-in-boon-for-rate-cuts/>

SMC and sustainable farming

By Melandrew Velasco

September 6, 2024, 12:00 am

“SMC’s involvement in agricultural production is not limited to cassava production”

Cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), one of the root crops cultivated here, is an important source of calories after rice and corn.

It contains carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals like Vitamin C, thiamine, riboflavin and niacin.

Aside from glutinous rice, cassava is a popular ingredient in Filipino delicacies like cassava cake, pichi-pichi, sago, and suman, among others, an ingredient for feeds and in the manufacture of starch.

An investment guide for cassava from the Department of Agriculture listed among the market potential for the root crop aside from food as livestock feeds, source of alcohol, and industrial uses such as in the manufacture of pharmaceutical products, paper, adhesives and textiles.

In the Major Vegetables and Root Crops Quarterly Bulletin (January-March 2024) published by the Philippine Statistics Authority, cassava production from January to March 2024 was placed at 445.99 thousand metric tons, registering a decrease of 8.9 percent from the previous year same quarter level of 489.41 thousand metric tons.

The top producers were Northern Mindanao, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, and Cagayan Valley whose combine output comprised 72.3 percent of the country’s total cassava production.

For 2023, the volume of cassava production was 2,556.24 thousand metric tons.

Among the buyers/processors of cassava in the country is San Miguel Foods, Inc., a subsidiary of San Miguel Corporation.

Last month, San Miguel Foods reported its regenerative agriculture program yielded over 90,000 metric tons of cassava in the first half of the year, 44 percent more than the produce for the same period last year.

Cassava, utilized by San Miguel Foods as partial or complete replacement for traditional feed ingredients like corn and wheat, is very useful in animal nutrition as its by-products, cassava meal and peels can also be used as feed components.

“Due to its high carbohydrate and energy content, it is used as an alternative for traditional ingredients like corn and wheat. Its byproduct, cassava pulp, may also be considered as another ingredient for animal feeds, highlighting the crop’s versatility in animal nutrition,” SMC Chairman and CEO Ramon S. Ang said.

To spur cultivation of cassava, San Miguel Foods has its Cassava Assemblers Program in which farmers organize and form small businesses to assemble a minimum of 20 hectares for cassava planting.

The program offers a guaranteed market with purchase agreements, fixed floor price and technical assistance.

Assemblers buy produce or harvest directly from small farm holdings which is helpful to farmers without adequate funds to transport and sell their produce.

This solves the problem of economies of scale in production, lowering the unit cost of harvesting or transport, to a point where it is profitable for both the farmer and the assembler.

This arrangement works best not only for the farmers and assemblers but also for San Miguel Foods as it is assured a steady supply of cassava for its requirements.

“Our goal has always been to support farmers by harnessing the potential of cassava, a root crop that is ideally suited for cultivation in the Philippines,” RSA added.

Under the program, 100 farmers cultivated cassava on 45,000 hectares of land across 57% of the country’s provinces, producing 66,763 MT of cassava last year.

The program has been ongoing for many years in many provinces nationwide.

Aside from cassava production, the program contributes to regenerative agriculture.

The crop contributes to the soil’s health as its root system can break up compacted soil, improve soil structure and increase organic matter content.

Cassava plants are also efficient at capturing carbon dioxide and storing this in their biomass and soil, contributing to carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation.

SMC's 2023 Sustainability Report said cassava's climate contribution include efficient capture of carbon dioxide, fewer chemical inputs requirement and "its drought tolerance and ability to thrive in marginal soils with low water availability."

SMC's involvement in agricultural production is not limited to cassava production.

It operates the mega poultry farm in Davao del Sur and more mega poultry farms to be established in other parts of the country.

SMC also has an urban farm called Backyard Bukid at the SMC headquarters where vegetables are grown. What started as a project during the pandemic years, Backyard Bukid is now replicated in other SMC facilities allowing employees to buy low-carbon, pesticide-free, and fresh vegetables.

It is stoking agricultural production.

Its involvement in agriculture reflects San Miguel Foods' dedication to sustainable farming practices, and SMC's own commitment to sustainability, as it benefits both the environment and local communities—helping create prosperity for farmers for generations to come.

(MTV, book author/publisher, is president and chief executive officer of Media Touchstone Ventures, Inc. and the president/executive director of the Million Trees Foundation Inc., a non-government outfit advocating tree-planting and environmental protection.)

<https://manilastandard.net/opinion/columns/everyman/314493433/smc-and-sustainable-farming.html>

Rice imports up 19%; local prices decreasing

By Janine Alexis Miguel
September 6, 2024

THE country's rice imports from January to August totaled 2.8 million metric tons (MT), 19 percent higher than the 2.3 million MT from the same period in 2023, according to data from the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In its latest report, the DA's Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) said in August alone, rice from abroad accelerated to 296,350.9 MT compared to 167,403.8 MT in July. However, it is still lower than the average monthly arrival of 400,000 MT logged in the earlier months.

On a bright note, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa on Thursday said rice prices have been decreasing: "We are seeing prices at around P45 per kilo for both regular and well-milled rice, and some areas... as low as P42."

As for production targets, the agency aims to produce 20.4 million MT of palay (unmilled rice) or 13.7 million MT of rice this year.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the effects of Executive Order 62 to further reduce rice tariffs will be felt by October.

Last June, the National Economic and Development Authority slashed taxes on imported rice to 15 percent from the previous 35 percent to "drive down" retail prices in the country.

The latest import volume from the BPI corresponds to 3,830 sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances issued by the bureau to accredited traders.

The report also showed Vietnam remained the Philippines' top source of the staple during the period, shipping over 2.17 million MT or around 77 percent of total imports.

Next was Thailand with 371,390 MT; followed by Pakistan, 156,121 MT; and Myanmar, 66,910 MT.

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

In 2023, inbound shipments of rice totaled 3.6 million MT, down 5.9 percent from the record-high 3.82 million MT in 2022. For 2024, the DA projects rice imports to not exceed last year's volume.

In terms of rice inflation, the department said that they are hopeful that it will continue to decrease to a single digit in the coming months. Report from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed that rice inflation dropped from 20.9 percent in July to 14.7 percent in August.

"We're very happy to note that rice inflation has decreased significantly ... That's a very significant reduction, and we're expecting that it will fall further in the coming months," de Mesa said.

Food inflation has also declined from 6.7 percent to 4.2 percent. As a result, the overall inflation rate decreased to 3.0 percent last month.

When asked regarding the impact of weather disturbances on inflation, de Mesa said that current disruptions have not significantly affected large areas and that annual losses are still within manageable limits.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/06/business/top-business/rice-imports-up-19-local-prices-decreasing/1969397>

Century Pacific buys Coco Harvest for \$40M

By Earl John Alfaro
September 6, 2024

FOOD and beverage firm Century Pacific Food Inc. (CNPF) said Thursday that it was acquiring 100 percent of Misamis Occidental-based coconut processing facility Coco Harvest Inc. for \$40 million.

"This deal is an accretive acquisition. More importantly, it marks a significant milestone for the company," CNPF President and Chief Executive Officer Ted Po said.

"Our coconut business, encompassing both domestic and export, has grown substantially these past few years on the back of burgeoning trends in health and wellness," he added.

CNPF said the \$400-million capital expenditure would be financed by internally generated cash flow. The purchase price was said to be less than 5 percent of CNPF's total assets as of end-December 2023.

The added capacity from Coco Harvest "will bolster our capability to serve rising demand, with room for expansion as the business grows," Po said.

Built in 2016, Coco Harvest was described as a fully integrated facility sitting on a 6-hectare property "strategically located to capitalize on the abundance of coconut supply in the region."

CNPF said Coco Harvest "has the capability to produce higher value coconut-based products such as coconut water, coconut milk, desiccated coconut and virgin coconut oil."

Po said the company expected the business to outgrow the facility's current capacity and had plans to expand in the future.

"We are encouraged by the long-term growth trajectory of our coconut business," he said. "From where we started, it has evolved to become globally competitive in the category through the team's commitment to excellence and innovation."

CNPF's acquisition of Coco Harvest is expected to generate over 1,500 manufacturing jobs in Mindanao, create demand for auxiliary services and also provide market access for coconut farmers in the region.

Last March, CNPF signed an expanded long-term agreement with The Vita Coco Co. Inc. that stipulated increased volume commitments amounting to approximately 90 million liters over the next five years.

CNPF shares rose 85 centavos, or 2.29 percent, to P38 apiece on Thursday amid a 0.38-percent advance for the benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange index.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/06/business/corporate-news/century-pacific-buys-coco-harvest-for-40m/1969394>

Inflation drops to 3.3%

By Niña Myka Pauline Arceo
September 6, 2024

INFLATION returned to the 2.0- to 4.0-percent target in August, settling at 3.3 percent after spiking to 4.4 percent a month earlier.

The result was within the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' (BSP) 3.2- to 4.0-percent estimate but was lower than the 3.7-percent median in a Manila Times poll of economists.

Consumer price growth a year earlier was an above-target 5.3 percent.

Core inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy items, declined to 2.6 percent from 2.9 percent in the previous month and 6.1 percent in the same month last year.

Year to date, headline inflation and core inflation hit 3.6 percent and 3.2 percent, respectively.

"The downtrend in the overall inflation in August 2024 was primarily brought about by the slower annual increment of food and nonalcoholic beverages at 3.9 percent in August 2024 from 6.4 percent in the previous month," the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said.

"Also contributing to the downtrend was transport with an annual drop of 0.2 percent during the month from a 3.6 percent annual increase in July 2024," it added.

Food price growth slows

Food inflation, in particular, slowed to 4.2 percent from the previous month's 6.7 percent.

"The deceleration of food inflation in August 2024 was primarily brought about by the slower inflation rate of rice with 14.7 percent in August 2024 from 20.9 percent in the previous month," the PSA said.

"This was followed by vegetables, tubers, plantains, cooking bananas and pulses with a year-on-year decline of 4.3 percent during the month from 6.1 percent annual increase in July 2024," it added.

National Statistician Claire Dennis Mapa said the slowdown in rice price growth was aligned with the PSA's expectation of a second-half drop due to base effects and lower rice tariffs implemented in July.

Executive Order 62, which slashed the duty on rice imports to 15 percent from 35 percent, took effect last month.

"We hope to see bigger drops in the coming months," Mapa said. "This month of September, it will further go down to single-digit."

Tariff cut to help

The BSP said that implementation of lower rice tariffs would ease inflation further.

"The balance of risks to the inflation outlook continues to lean toward the downside for 2024 and 2025 with a slight tilt to the upside for 2026," it noted.

"The downside risks are linked mainly to lower import tariffs on rice, while upside risks could come from higher electricity rates and external factors."

The central bank said that monetary officials would "continue to take a measured approach in ensuring price stability conducive to balanced and sustainable growth of the economy and employment."

Firms, households to benefit

Easing inflation could encourage more investments and support growth in household consumption, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said in a separate statement.

Balisacan noted that low-income households, where 51.4 percent of spending is on food, would particularly benefit.

Businesses, concerned about persistent inflation, could, meanwhile, be encouraged to boost investments and expand, especially with declining borrowing costs.

Balisacan, however, warned that potential risks remained from rising electricity rates and unusual weather disturbances.

"The government is prepared to address these pressures to ensure stable inflation," he said.

"Notably, the government has allocated P15 billion for national risk reduction in 2024," Balisacan continued.

"The government will continue to implement measures to reduce further inflationary pressures, including enhancing agricultural productivity, expanding logistics infrastructure and ensuring the efficient delivery of social services."

In Malacañang, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said the government was putting in place steps to ensure that every Filipino feels the benefits of lower inflation.

"Our work will not stop. We will continue to make progress to ensure that every Filipino will have a more comfortable life by having quality jobs and cheap commodities," he said in statements posted on official social media accounts.

One measure is the establishment of more Kadiwa centers, where affordable goods are offered to the public, across the country.

The government is also taking steps to stabilize the prices of fuel and has also begun the controlled roll-out of a vaccine against African swine fever vaccine to prevent pork prices from spiking.

"These are concrete steps we're taking to make sure that the Bagong Pilipinas we promised is felt where it matters most, here at home," Marcos said.

WITH A REPORT FROM KRISTINA MARALIT

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/06/business/top-business/inflation-drops-to-33/1969406>

Full relief from cheap rice? Wait till next year

Cai U. Ordinario
September 6, 2024

FILIPINOS looking for some relief in terms of rice prices may have to wait till next year for the full fruition of the promise offered by the reduction in rice tariffs, according to an economist.

On Thursday, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) disclosed that the country's inflation rate slowed to 3.3 percent in August on the back of cheaper food and transportation costs. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/05/inflation-slows-down-at-3-3-in-august-2024-psa/>).

Part of the reasons for the reduction in overall inflation was cheaper rice, which led to an inflation rate of 14.7 percent year-on-year growth and deflation of 0.5 percent month-on-month in August. Rice accounts for 8.87 percent of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and 32.7 percent of the reduction in inflation last month.

“Hopefully, it's (full impact) earlier, it's within this year, but looking at the history of the tariffication we could see some time well into the next year to start feeling the effect (of the reduction in rice tariffs),” Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) Roehlano Briones told BusinessMirror at the sidelines of the launch of the Development Policy Research Month (DPRM) on Thursday.

Briones said the promise of the tariff reduction is to bring down the cost of rice by P6 to P7 per kilo. But non-trade factors such as issues with the implementation of some Sanitary Phytosanitary (SPS) policies prevent traders from maximizing the reduced tariffs.

He added that the case filed against the reduction of tariffs—currently at the Supreme Court—creates issues that also prevent the maximization of the benefits of lower duties.

If the Supreme Court grants the petition halting the implementation of the tariff reduction and some traders' shipments have already been shipped, that could create problems for these imports.

“There are also some issues I have with the current cost, trade facilitation. [Because] it's beyond tariff. For instance, there's this 30-day use-it-or-lose-it requirement for the SPS,” Briones also told this newspaper.

“And then, they said, make it 60 days so that we can shop around in case the order is cancelled. Which puzzles me a lot. Isn't your permit supposed to be with a specific source? And if you switch your source, you have to reboot. You have to restart your application,” he added.

According to National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) Undersecretary Rosemarie G. Edillon, there is still no assurance that the full impact of the reduction in rice tariffs will be felt this year.

Edillon told BusinessMirror that rice prices in the international market remain elevated and that will have an impact on the country's imports of the staple.

Nonetheless, she said, expectations that oil prices will see reductions in the coming months give hope that lower rice tariffs will lead to cheaper rice imports.

“It looks promising, yes. And, of course, we're also banking on the [premise that] many other productivity-enhancing measures of DA (Department of Agriculture) will finally (come through and) we could see the results already,” Edillon told this newspaper.

However, National Statistician Claire Dennis S. Mapa said the reduction in rice tariffs has so far slashed special rice costs by 80 centavos per kilo as well as well-milled rice by 40 centavos per kilo.

Based on the latest monitoring of PSA, regular milled rice cost P50.66 per kilo, lower than the P50.90 posted in July, but higher than the P43.29 per kilo recorded in August 2023.

For well-milled rice, the PSA said it costs P55.56 per kilo, lower than the P55.85 posted in July but higher than the P47.65 per kilo in August 2023.

In terms of special rice, the average price is P64.08 per kilo in August 2024, lower than the P64.42 per kilo in July 2024 but higher than the P56.24 per kilo recorded in August 2023.

Balisacan: Economy stimulated

Meanwhile, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said easing of inflation and stable prices will greatly benefit households and businesses, spurring consumer spending and economic activity.

Balisacan also said that while inflation continues to trend downward—primarily due to reduced import tariffs on rice—potential pressures could emerge from higher electricity rates and above-normal weather disturbances.

“The government is prepared to address these pressures to ensure stable inflation. Preparations to counter the effects of the La Niña phenomenon are under way, including improvements in early warning systems, the utilization of communication systems to issue warnings about dam openings, measures to address the potential accelerated speed of livestock diseases, and greater involvement of local government units in information dissemination, are in progress. Notably, the government has allocated P15 billion for national risk reduction in 2024,” Balisacan explained.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) will expand the KADIWA ng Pangulo program in the Visayas and Mindanao to enhance access to affordable agricultural products, Balisacan said.

The DA is also collaborating with various food manufacturers to supply KADIWA stores with essential goods, including canned sardines, cooking oil, condiments, fresh fish, and poultry.

“The government will continue to implement measures to reduce further inflationary pressures, including enhancing agricultural productivity, expanding logistics infrastructure, and ensuring the efficient delivery of social services,” Balisacan said.

“These efforts are crucial not only for stabilizing prices but also for ensuring that economic growth translates into tangible improvements in the lives of all Filipinos,” he added.

BSP’s take

Meanwhile, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said the latest inflation print was within the BSP's forecast range of 3.2 to 4.0 percent.

The BSP noted that this was aligned with its assessment that inflation will revert to the target range in August after the temporary uptick observed in July, due to negative base effects and the easing of supply pressures for key food items, particularly rice.

“The balance of risks to the inflation outlook continues to lean toward the downside for 2024 and 2025, with a slight tilt to the upside for 2026. The downside risks are linked mainly to lower import tariffs on rice, while upside risks could come from higher electricity rates and external factors,” the BSP said.

Earlier, the monetary authorities may have entered the easing cycle as additional rate cuts could be on the horizon after the latest monetary policy action, which reduced interest rates for the first time in four years.

In an interview, BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona Jr. was asked whether the Monetary Board has entered its easing cycle, and he said another rate cut is possible this year. Nonetheless, the monetary authorities will continue monitoring the situation.

Remolona told reporters the Monetary Board will make another 25-basis-point reduction in policy rates either in its October or December meeting.

Remolona also noted that inflation has been “behaved” and remained within their expectations. He said the 4.4-percent inflation posted in July was within BSP's expectations for the month.

The BSP Governor also said the inflation rate in July was driven mainly by base effects amounting to 0.3 percentage points. Remolona said without the base effect, the inflation would only be 4.1 percent. (*See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/17/bsp-easing-cycle-seen-as-governor-remolona-says-another-rate-cut-possible/>*).

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/06/full-relief-from-cheap-rice-wait-till-next-year/>

Recto sees more palpable rice price decline in September

Reine Juvierre S. Alberto
September 6, 2024

WITH the reduced rice tariffs lowering the rice prices and slowing down overall inflation in August 2024, consumers can expect rice prices to drop in September, according to Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto.

Inflation eased to 3.3 percent in August 2024 due to slower annual increment of food and non-alcoholic beverages at 3.9 percent in August 2024 from 6.4 percent in the previous month, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/05/inflation-slows-down-at-3-3-in-august-2024-psa/>).

This is within the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' (BSP) forecast of 3.2 to 4.0 percent for August 2024.

The national average inflation from January to August 2024 stood at 3.6 percent and was within the government's target band of 3 to 4 percent for the year.

Rice inflation slowed down to 14.7 percent in August 2024 from 20.9 percent in July 2024. Month-on-month reduction in retail rice prices was recorded from 0.47 percent to 0.53 percent.

"The lower rice tariffs are already showing results. Rice inflation is slowing down and rice imports grew by 77 percent in August, according to the latest data from the Bureau of Customs (BOC)," Recto said in a statement on Thursday.

The Finance chief expects rice prices to drop "more noticeably" this month as rice imported with lower tariffs in August reaches the local market. Rice tariffs were reduced to 15 percent from 35 percent until 2028.

Earlier, Recto said an average of 10 percent reduction in retail prices is expected for the rest of the year, which could lower the price of rice by at least 5 pesos per kilo.

“We will not be complacent. While we are now seeing the positive results of our measures, we are proactively monitoring potential inflationary risks to address them in a timely and targeted manner,” Recto said.

Moreover, the Department of Finance (DOF) said the Department of Agriculture (DA) is ramping up its efforts in implementing measures to safeguard farmers and ensure food security.

As such, the DA is extending the ship-out date for rice imports to 60 days from 30 days, which allows local importers more time to secure better rates amidst price volatility and reduce retail rice prices.

The government also vowed its support to extend the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) until 2030 and its planned increase to enhance local rice production and address the needs of rice farmers.

“The sustained drop in inflation will boost our household consumption for the rest of the year as well as encourage more investments, particularly as borrowing costs decrease,” Recto added.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/06/recto-sees-more-palpable-rice-price-decline-in-september/>

Century Pacific Food buys Mindanao coco processor

VG Cabuag
September 6, 2024

Tuna canner Century Pacific Food Inc. (CNPF) on Thursday said it acquired Coco Harvest Inc., which owns a coconut processing facility in Misamis Occidental, for about \$40 million.

Built in 2016, the fully integrated facility of Coco Harvest sits on a six-hectare property and has the capability to produce higher value coconut-based products such as coconut water, coconut milk, desiccated coconut and virgin coconut oil.

“This deal is an accretive acquisition. More importantly, it marks a significant milestone for the company. Our coconut business, encompassing both domestic and export, has grown substantially these past few years on the back of burgeoning trends in health and wellness.

The additional capacity from Coco Harvest will bolster our capability to serve rising demand, with room for expansion as the business grows,” Ted Po, CNPF president and CEO, said.

Century Pacific said the existing facility is strategically located to capitalize on the abundance of coconut supply in Mindanao.

The company is buying Coco Harvest with further facility improvements. The funds will come from internally generated cash.

The capacity expansion is expected to generate more than 1,500 manufacturing jobs in Mindanao. It will also create demand for auxiliary services needed by the plant as well as provide market access for the harvests of coconut farmers in the region, according to CNPF.

In March, CNPF inked a new, expanded long-term agreement with The Vita Coco Co. Inc., a global player in the coconut water category. The agreement stipulates increased volume commitments from Vita Coco amounting to approximately 90 million liters over the next five years.

CNPF entered the coconut category in 2012 as a manufacturer of coconut water for OEM export. Since then, the export business has grown organically as the company built manufacturing capability in other product formats, serving key players in Southeast Asia, such as Linaco Manufacturing.

CNPF also launched a branded coconut business serving the domestic market. In 2022, the company further augmented its capacity to serve the business' growing needs.

Po said CNPF anticipates that the business will outgrow the facility's current capacity and has plans for further investments in expansion in the future.

"We are encouraged by the long-term growth trajectory of our coconut business," Po said.

"From where we started, it has evolved to become globally competitive in the category through the team's commitment to excellence and innovation. It's a platform where we believe we can create more value for the company as well as the local coconut farming industry."

There are approximately 2.5 million coconut farmers in the Philippines, mostly located in the southern regions of the country where CNPF's coconut business operates.

The company's expanded presence in the region provides local smallholder farmers with market access.

In 2021, CNPF committed 1 million coconut seedlings to smallholder farmers in partnership with GCash and impact organization HOPE. These seedlings replace low-yielding, senile coconut trees, "thereby increasing farm productivity, boosting smallholder farmers' income, improving their livelihoods, and supporting long-term coconut supply."

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/06/century-pacific-food-buys-mindanao-coco-processor/>

End-August rice arrivals breach 2.8MMT, from 2.3MMT in 2023

Ada Pelonia
September 5, 2024

THE country's rice arrivals have breached 2.8 million metric tons (MMT) as of August 29, higher than last year's import volume, latest government data showed.

Figures from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) showed that total rice imports from January 1 to August 29 were higher than the 2.35 MMT recorded during the reference period.

More than 2.17 MMT of rice imports came from Vietnam, which remains the country's top source of imported rice. Shipments from Thailand trailed behind at 371,390.74 MT.

BPI data showed that the Philippines also imported rice from other countries like Pakistan (156,121.32 MT), Myanmar (66,910 MT), and India (21,890.04 MT).

"The rice imports are picking up this August," Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa told reporters in Filipino last Wednesday.

This, after rice arrivals in July slowed to 167,403.84 MT following the implementation of Executive Order (EO) 62 which lowered the tariffs to 15 percent and took effect on July 7.

Industry experts earlier noted that traders could slow down importing while waiting for the ruling on the legality of EO 62 after agricultural groups sought a temporary restraining order (TRO) against its implementation.

Rice arrivals in August reached 296,350.96 MT. However, this was still lower than the average shipments made from the first semester at 390,065.93 MT.

“We’re still expecting that there would be a reduction in [rice prices],” De Mesa said in Filipino, noting that the price of imported rice has seen a decline in retail prices.

Based on the DA’s price monitoring, the price of local well-milled rice in Metro Manila markets ranged between P47 and P55 per kilo while regular milled ranged from P43 to P50 per kilo as of September 4.

The price of imported well-milled rice in select markets in the metro ranged from P47 to P55 per kilo while regular milled ranged between P47 and P50 per kilo in the same period.

However, this was lower than the imported well-milled rice recorded in May 29 which ranged between P52 and P55 per kilo with regular milled ranging from P49 to P51 per kilo.

Meanwhile, BPI data showed that BLY Agri Venture Trading led the 154 rice importers with a total volume of 198,646.99 MT.

Orison Free Enterprise Inc. trailed behind at 164,095.45 MT followed by Macman Rice and Corn Trading at 128,563.30 MT.

Data from the attached agency of the DA also showed that it approved and issued 6,394 sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs) which covered the importation of 6.64 MMT of rice.

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

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

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/05/end-august-rice-arrivals-breach-2-8mmt-from-2-3mmt-in-2023/>

Government inflation control focuses on keeping food affordable

Samuel P. Medenilla
September 5, 2024



Morning market scene in Barangay San Roque, Parola, Cainta, Rizal, where residents navigate fluctuating prices. Despite inflationary pressures, recent declines in oil and rice prices offer some relief, though higher electricity rates and the cost of meat still weigh heavily on household budgets.

PRESIDENT Marcos said initiatives to sustain the slowdown in the inflation rate will focus on keeping food accessible and affordable, and oil prices stable.

In a social media post on Thursday, Marcos lauded the slowdown in headline inflation rate last month to 3.3 percent from 5.3 percent year-on-year.

The latest inflation figure also improved compared to the 4.4 headline inflation last July.

“Today, we celebrate this victory for Filipinos,” Marcos said.

He attributed the improvement to Executive Order 62, which he issued last June to reduce the tariff on rice from 35 percent to 15 percent.

“By reducing rice tariffs, we brought rice inflation down from 20.9 percent to 14.7 percent, and meat inflation also eased from 4.8 percent to 4.0 percent, which is a great relief for the daily expenses of families,” Marcos said.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) earlier said it will review by November if there is a need to adjust the existing rice tariff.

Marcos said the administration is aiming to keep inflation rate low through the expansion of his Kadiwa ng Pangulo initiatives, which allows agricultural producers to sell their products directly to consumers at a lower cost through state support.

He said the “controlled roll out” of the vaccine against African Swine Fever (ASF) will also help ensure the country’s reliable pork supply.

There are also ongoing government efforts, he said, to keep the price of oil and transportation stable through state subsidies.

“These are concrete steps we’re taking to make sure that the Bagong Pilipinas [New Philippines] we promised is felt where it matters most—at home,” Marcos said.

Image credits: [Bernard Testa](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/05/government-inflation-control-focuses-on-keeping-food-affordable/>

Mati local government issues tougher rules on hog transport

Manuel Cayon
September 5, 2024

Davao City—The local government of Mati City is imposing more stringent measures to prevent the entry of pork products that may be contaminated with African swine fever (ASF).

The recent outbreak that started outside of Metro Manila has already spread to 32 provinces in the country, with nine in Mindanao, of which two of them—Agusan del Sur and Surigao del Sur—are in the northern border of Davao Oriental. Mati City is the capital of Davao Oriental.

“To safeguard against the spread of African Swine Fever (ASF), the City Government of Mati has implemented stringent measures regulating the movement of live hogs, pork, pork-related products, and byproducts in and out of the city,” its information office has announced last Tuesday.

Mayor Michelle Nakpil Rabat issued Executive Order 94 last August 28 which strictly prohibits the entry and exit of all “undocumented swine, pork, pork-related products, and by-products.”

The city government has instructed barangays with reported cases of animal morbidities or mortalities to enforce strict biosecurity protocols and swine movement outside affected areas “is heavily restricted.”

It has also ordered members of Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team members, along with designated barangay biosecurity officers from the City Veterinarian Services Office (CVSO) to monitor and prevent the sale of sick animals by viajeros or buyers, ambulatory meat vendors, and prohibit backyard slaughtering, even for personal use.

Private company technicians are required to coordinate with the CVSO before entering any farms in Mati City and are barred from visiting areas with reported ASF

outbreaks to prevent cross-contamination between barangays, the information office added.

EO 94 was issued following reports of ASF outbreaks in several barangays in the city.

City Veterinarian Marites Erispe said, however, that there are no confirmed ASF cases in Mati.

“We have submitted several samples for testing, and most have returned negative,” she said, adding officials are still awaiting the result of tests conducted on six remaining samples.

The executive order requires that any live hogs entering Mati from other areas must be accompanied by an ASF-free certificate, a shipping permit, and a Veterinary Health Certificate.

“For meat, meat products, and by-products—including bacon, ham, pork tocino, longanisa, hotdogs, chorizo, chicharron, siopao, and siomai—documentation such as a Meat Inspection Certificate (MIC) for local products, a Certificate of Meat Inspection (COMI) for imported goods, an FDA License to Operate (FDA-LTO), a Certificate of Product Registration (FDA-CPR), and a shipping permit is required.”

It added that transporters of live animals must present all necessary documents and submit their vehicles for thorough disinfection at Animal Quarantine Checkpoints located at the city’s entry and exit points.

Those without proper documentation will be turned back to their place of origin. Any undocumented meat, meat products, or by-products discovered at these checkpoints will be confiscated by local government personnel and subjected to proper disinfection and disposal procedures.

Rabat has assigned the Incident Management Team (IMT) for ASF, H5N1 Bird Flu, and other emerging and re-emerging diseases to work closely with relevant national government agencies to ensure strict enforcement of the executive order.

The IMT will spearhead efforts to implement the order in accordance with existing laws and regulations concerning food security and quarantine.

Violators of the executive order will face penalties under Republic Act (RA) 10536 (Meat Inspection Code of the Philippines), RA 8485 (The Animal Welfare Act of 1998), and City Ordinance 464, Series of 2021 (Animal Code of the City of Mati).

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/05/mati-local-government-issues-tougher-rules-on-hog-transport/>

Agricultural trade deficit widens in Q2, PSA data show

Ada Pelonia
September 5, 2024

The country's farm trade deficit expanded by 13.8 percent in the second quarter, according to the latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

PSA data showed that total value of agricultural exports in the April-to-June period reached \$1.86 billion, accounting for 27.4 percent share to the total farm trade. The value of agricultural imports reached \$4.94 billion or 72.6 percent of the total agricultural trade.

“The country's total agricultural trade in the second quarter of 2024, which amounted to \$6.80 billion, posted an annual increase of 14.3 percent. In the first quarter of 2024, the total agricultural trade recorded an annual increase of 2.6 percent, while an annual decrease of 14.7 percent was registered in the second quarter of 2023,” PSA said.

“In the second quarter of 2024, the total balance of trade in agricultural goods was recorded at -\$3.07 billion, which reflects a deficit with an annual increment of 13.8 percent. In the first quarter of 2024 and second quarter of 2023, the trade deficit registered annual declines of 6.5 percent and 0.04 percent, respectively.”

Cereals, including rice and wheat, were the country's top food imports at \$1.28 billion or 44.3 percent higher than the \$888.26 million recorded last year. It accounted for 26 percent of the total value of agricultural imports in the second quarter.

The top five sources of cereals for the Philippines were Vietnam, the United States, Australia, Brazil and Thailand.

The other major agricultural imports during the period were residues and waste from the food industries, miscellaneous edible preparations, and meat and edible meat offal.

Agricultural exports during the period were higher by 14.7 percent compared with the \$1.62 billion recorded in 2023.

The top five farm exports were edible fruit and nuts; animal, vegetable, or microbial fats and oils and their cleavage products; preparations of vegetables, fruit, nuts or other parts of plants; preparations of meat, of fish, of crustaceans, mollusks; and tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes.

The PSA noted that of the commodity groups, edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or melons, which was valued at \$543.62 million, comprised the largest share of total agricultural exports in the second quarter.

“Among the Asean member countries, Malaysia was the top buyer of agricultural exports worth \$95.22 million or a share of 41.9 percent to the total value of agricultural exports to Asean member countries in the second quarter of 2024,” PSA said.

“Among the EU member countries, Netherlands was the country’s top destination of agricultural commodities worth \$179.77 million or 50.1 percent of the total agricultural exports to EU member countries for this quarter of 2024.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/05/agricultural-trade-deficit-widens-in-q2-psa-data-show/>

Upholding fairness: The fight for justice for Filipino fisherfolk

BusinessMirror Editorial

September 5, 2024

The challenges faced by our fisherfolk are not just limited to the perils of the sea; they extend to a complex web of issues that threaten their livelihoods and well-being on land as well. From declining fish catches to lack of access to vital resources, their struggles are deeply intertwined with systemic injustices that demand urgent attention and redress.

Recent developments surrounding the safety of fish caught in Manila Bay have shed light on a critical aspect of this multifaceted crisis: the exploitation of fisherfolk by unscrupulous traders. While the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has declared the fish safe for consumption, the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) rightly emphasizes that this should translate into fair treatment for the fishermen who have long borne the brunt of market injustices. (Read the BusinessMirror story: “Manila Bay fish still unreasonably priced—group,” September 2, 2024).

Reports of plummeting farm gate prices in Cavite, Bataan, and Navotas following the recent oil spill not only underscore the vulnerability of fisherfolk to environmental disasters but also highlight the predatory practices of traders. Slashing prices by over 50 percent for key catches like halubaybay or isdang salinas and alimasag (blue crab) is an egregious abuse that perpetuates the poverty cycle for these vulnerable communities. It is an outrage that BFAR has had to explicitly state that fish from Manila Bay are now safe to eat, yet traders are still manipulating the market. This predatory behavior must be swiftly addressed through decisive government intervention.

Pamalakaya’s call for BFAR to intervene and ensure fair pricing for fisherfolk is not just a plea for economic justice; it is a demand for the recognition of the inherent dignity and rights of poor Filipinos. Our fishermen should not have to navigate treacherous waters only to find themselves ensnared in a cycle of poverty perpetuated by those who seek to profit off their labor and sacrifices.

It is imperative that BFAR, in light of the recent safety clearance for fish from Manila Bay, takes decisive action to safeguard the interests of our fisherfolk. Directives should be issued to fish ports to establish transparent and equitable pricing mechanisms that reflect the true value of the labor and resources invested by our fishermen. Fair prices are not just a matter of economic viability; they are a testament to our collective commitment to upholding fairness, dignity, and social justice for all.

As we welcome the good news that fish from Manila Bay are safe to eat, let's not forget the ongoing struggle for justice faced by fisherfolk nationwide. Their struggles are not isolated incidents but symptomatic of wider systemic inequities that require systemic solutions. Let us stand in solidarity with those who brave the seas to feed us, and ensure that they are treated with the respect and fairness they rightfully deserve.

In the words of Pamalakaya's Vice Chairman Ronnel Arambulo, now is the time for action. Let us heed this call and work towards a future where our fisherfolk are not just survivors of the sea, but thriving members of a society that values their contributions and upholds their rights with unwavering resolve. The future of Filipino fisherfolk can only be secured by addressing the systemic challenges they confront.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/05/upholding-fairness-the-fight-for-justice-for-filipino-fisherfolk/>

Winasak ni `Enteng`, habagat pumalo sa P360 milyon

September 6, 2024

Mahigit P360 milyon na ang kabuuang halaga ng pinsala sa agrikultura dahil sa hagupit ng Bagyong Enteng at ng southwest monsoon o habagat, ayon sa ulat ng Department of Agriculture-Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DA-DRRM) Operations Center.

“Ang pinakamalaking damage ay reported sa Camarines Sur at P342 million, so, karamihan halos nasa kanila,” ayon kay DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa sa isang panayam nitong Huwebes, Setyembre 5.

Iniulat din aniya ang matinding pinsala sa agrikultura mula sa mga lalawigan ng Catanduanes, Albay, Negros Occidental, Northern Samar, at Bulacan.

Wala pang ulat na natatanggap ang DA mula sa Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Calabarzon, at Mimaropa.

Samantala, pinakamatinding hinagupit umano ng bagyo ang rice production na umabot ng 14,177 metriko tonelada o P340 milyon na kabuuang halaga.(PNA)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/09/06/winasak-ni-enteng-habagat-pumalo-sa-p360-milyon/>

Inflation bumagal sa 3.3%

[Angie dela Cruz](#)

September 6, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Nagkaroon ng pagbagal ang inflation o ang paggalaw ng presyo ng mga bilingin noong nagdaang buwan ng Agosto ngayong taon.

Ayon sa Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), pumalo lang sa 3.3 percent ang inflation, mas mababa ito sa 4.4 percent noong nagdaang Hulyo.

Ayon pa sa PSA, bumagal ang pagtaas ng presyo ng pagkain at transportasyon kaya bumagal ang inflation.

Mas mababa rin ang 3.3% na naitala noong Agosto kumpara sa 5.3% noong Agosto 2023.

Ang food inflation ay nasa 3.9% noong Agosto, mas mababa sa 6.4% noong Hulyo.

Bumagal din ang rice inflation sa 14.7% mula sa 20.9% noong Hulyo at bumagal din ang transport inflation sa -0.2 percent mula sa 3.6% noong Hulyo.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/09/06/2383255/inflation-bumagal-sa-33>

REMATE:

12 onion traders sinampahan ng reklamo ng PCC sa ‘cartel behavior’

September 5, 2024 13:52



MANILA, Philippines – Inanunsyo ng Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) nitong Huwebes, Setyembre 5 na naghain sila ng reklamo laban sa 12 onion traders dahil sa mga aksyon na gaya ng sa isang kartel na “harmed consumers and the economy in general.”

Matatandaan na sinimulan ng PCC na imbestigahan ang pagkakaroon ng mga onion cartel mula nang lumobo nang hanggang P700 kada kilo ang presyo ng sibuyas noong 2022.

Noong nakaraang taon, ipinag-utos ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang imbestigasyon sa umano’y hoarding, smuggling, at price fixing ng mga sibuyas at iba pang agricultural products, na tinawag niyang “economic sabotage.”

Sa ilalim ng Republic Act 10845 o Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016, ikinokonsidera ang large-scale agricultural smuggling bilang isang economic sabotage.

Noong Agosto, nagpasa ang Senado at Kamara ng panukalang “Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act.” *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/12-onion-traders-sinampahan-ng-reklamo-ng-pcc-sa-cartel-behavior/>

REMATE:

DA: Mga kalamidad wa epek sa suplay ng bigas

September 5, 2024 09:45



MANILA, Philippines – Tiniyak ng Department of Agriculture (DA) nitong Miyerkoles na sapat at matatag ang suplay ng bigas at pagkain sa bansa habang ang pinsalang pang-agrikultura ay nagbabadya na lumampas sa taunang average na may pinagsamang epekto ng mga natural na kalamidad.

“In terms sa bigas na meron tayo ngayon, in terms of volume na meron tayo, there’s no reason na matakot tayo dahil may sapat na suplay na nanggagaling sa lokal na produksyon at pag-aangkat,” ani DA Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa sa isang panayam.

Kaugnay nito nitong Agosto 29, naitala ng DA ang pagdating ng mahigit 2.8 milyong metriko tonelada (MT) na importasyon ng bigas mula Enero, na kinabibilangan ng 296,350 MT na dumating noong Agosto.

Ginawa ni De Mesa ang katiyakan habang iniulat ng DA ang mahigit PHP8.46 bilyon halaga ng pagkalugi sa produksyon ng palay, katumbas ng 386,960.34 MT, dahil sa pinagsamang epekto ng El Niño phenomenon, shearline, northeast monsoon, trough ng low-pressure area , Bagyong Aghon, Super Bagyong Carina at habagat, at ang unang pinsala sa agrikultura mula sa Tropical Storm Enteng mula Enero hanggang Setyembre.

Ang taunang average na pagkawala sa produksyon ng bigas ay umaabot mula 500,000 MT hanggang 600,000 MT, kung isasaalang-alang ang pananalasa ng mga bagyo sa Pilipinas.

“Sa rice yun, kung ito nasa almost 400,000 (MT), syempre wala pa yung epekto ng La Niña ‘di ba? So, mabi-breach mo na iyong normal average annual losses ” sabi ni De Mesa.

Sa pangkalahatan, iniulat ng DA ang PHP23 bilyon na halaga ng pinsala sa agrikultura para sa 979,125 MT volume loss sa buong bansa.

Gayunman, sinabi ni De Mesa na ang epekto ng El Niño at iba pang kalamidad ay maaaring mas malala pa kung wala ang mitigation efforts ng DA.

Samantala tiniyak din niya ang mga interbensyon upang mabawasan ang epekto ng nagbabantang La Niña, na kinabibilangan ng pagkumpleto, rehabilitasyon, at pagkukumpuni ng mga irigasyon ng bansa.

Kaugnay nito iniulat naman ng DA – Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (DRRM) na PHP350.85 milyon ang halaga ng paunang pinsala dahil sa epekto ng Enteng, na nakaapekto sa 13,623 magsasaka. (*Santi Celario*)

<https://remate.ph/da-mga-kalamidad-wa-epek-sa-suplay-ng-bigas/>

REMATE:

Suplay ng asukal sapat ‘gang 2025 – SRA

September 5, 2024 09:33



SINABI ng Sugar Regulatory Administration. (SRA) na inaasahang mananatiling stable ang presyo ng local na asukal at tiniyak na sapat ang domestic supply hanggang sa ikalawang quarter ng 2025 iniulat nitong Miyerkules (Setyembre 4).

“Dahil sapat at stable ang supply po, ipinakita ng mga presyo na medyo stable ang retail price natin at mababa po,” sinabi ni SRA chief Pablo Luis Azcona sa panayam.

Nitong Miyerkules, ang presyo ng refined sugar sa Metro Manila ay mula PHP74 kada kilo hanggang PHP95/kg; PHP68/kg hanggang PHP90/kg para sa hugasan na asukal; at PHP65/kg hanggang PHP90/kg para sa brown sugar.

“So far, based doon sa estimates natin sa crop , actual stock on hand and iyong imports natin na arriving, sapat po yung supply natin siguro hanggang pagtatapos ng paggiling sa Mayo o Hunyo 2025,” sabi ni Azcona.

“Iyong supply po natin sa sugar, it’s been stable the whole 2023-2024 crop year and ready na din po tayo for 2024-2025.”

Kaugnay nito para sa pag-aangkat ng asukal, naunang sinabi ng SRA na humigit-kumulang 240,000 MT ng refined sugar ang inaasahang darating upang mapanatili ang matatag na buffer stock at mga retail na presyo, at masakop ang agwat bago ang panahon ng paggiling sa Oktubre.

Sinabi pa ng SRA na ang produksyon ng asukal para sa taon ng pananim 2024-2025 mula Setyembre 1 hanggang Agosto 31, 2025, na tinatayang nasa 1.78 milyong metriko tonelada (MT), samantala, ilalaan para sa domestic use ayon sa Sugar Order No. 1.

Ang nasabing tinantyang output, gayunpaman, ay nagdudulot ng bahagyang pag-urong mula sa 1.92 milyong MT na produksyon noong taon ng pananim 2023-2024.

“Iyong pagsisikap ng SRA sa ngayon, na siyang mandato ng ating DA (Department of Agriculture) Secretary at ng ating administrasyon, ay kasalukuyang pagbutihin ang supply para hindi na tayo umaasa sa imported na asukal,” Sabi ni Azcona. (*Santi Celario*)

<https://remate.ph/suplay-ng-asukal-sapat-gang-2025-sra/>

REMATE:

Rice inflation bumagal sa 14.7% noong Agosto

September 5, 2024 13:13



MANILA, Philippines – Bumagal ang inflation rate ng bigas noong Agosto dahil sa pinagsamang base effects at epekto ng pinababang tariff rates sa imported na bigas sa nasabing panahon, ayon sa datos na inilabas ng Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA) nitong Huwebes, Setyembre 5.

Sa pulong balitaan, sinabi ni PSA chief at National Statistician Claire Dennis Mapa na ang rice inflation ay pumalo sa 14.7% noong nakaraan buwan kumpara sa 20.9% noong Hulyo.

Ito na ang pinakamabagal na inflation print mula noong Oktubre 2023 nang maitala ang 13.2%.

Tugma ang pagbagal ng rice inflation noong Agosto sa inaasahan ng PSA na magsisimula ang paghupa ng presyo nito sa ikalawang bahagi ng 2024.

Matatandaan na inilabas ang Executive Order No. 62 na nagtatapyas sa tariff rates sa imported na bigas sa 15% mula sa 35% na umepekto noong nakaraang buwan.

Kasabay nito ay sinabi ng PSA na ang pagpapababa sa taripa sa imported na bigas ay magpapababa rin sa retail price sa kada kilo ng bigas ng P6 hanggang P7.

“This month of September, it will further go down to single-digit,” sinabi ng PSA chief. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/rice-inflation-bumagal-sa-14-7-noong-agosto/>