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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **P292.23-B realignments in 2025 GAB to boost 'ayuda', defense, food security budgets**

**BY [ELLSON QUISMORIO](#)**

Oct 15, 2024 05:06 PM

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## **AT A GLANCE**

- The so-called "small committee" in the House of Representatives has decided to realign P292.23 billion under the 2025 General Appropriations Bill (GAB) or proposed national budget in a bid to enhance social services, strengthen social safety nets, and ensure food security.



House of Representatives (Ellson Quismorio/ MANILA BULLETIN)

The so-called "small committee" in the House of Representatives has decided to realign P292.23 billion under the 2025 General Appropriations Bill (GAB) or proposed national budget in a bid to enhance social services, strengthen social safety nets, and ensure food security.

Committee on Appropriations Chairman Ako-Bicol Party-list Rep. Zaldy Co said this funding package within the P6.352-trillion GAB for next year aims to address the pressing needs of vulnerable sectors including financially-challenged students, farmers, fisherfolk, soldiers, indigent families, and those who barely passed the poverty threshold.

"The additional funding is crucial for supporting those in need. We're providing assistance to struggling families especially during these challenging times," Co said in a statement Tuesday, Oct. 15, or a day after the first meeting of the small committee.

The Bicolano said the funding is on top of the P591.8-billion already set aside by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) for "ayuda" or cash assistance to impoverished families.

The small committee is composed of Co, Marikina City 2nd district Rep. Stella Quimbo, Majority Leader Zamboanga City 1st district Rep. Mannix Dalipe, and Minority Leader 4Ps Party-list Rep. Nonoy Libanan.

### **More funds for 'ayuda' programs**

Among the key enhancements in the 2025 GAB include the extra P39.8 billion for the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS)--a program designed to offer immediate support to Filipinos facing financial hardships.

Due to the wide acceptance and public clamor for the Ayuda sa Kapos ang Kita Program (AKAP), the House earmarked another P39.8 billion for cash assistance targeting individuals who earn P21,000 and below per month.

The amount is three times bigger than the current 2024 allocation of P13 billion.

Co says AKAP is designed to benefit the "near poor" or "lower middle class" segment of the population. These includes minimum wage earners vulnerable to economic shocks like sudden death of household head, sickness, loss of jobs or runaway inflation that can easily send them back to poverty.

The House also allocated P3.4 billion for the Sustainable Livelihood Program for low-income families. "We believe that empowering individuals through livelihood programs will help break the cycle of poverty," Co added.

Quimbo stressed the importance of proactive measures in the proposed budget.

The appropriations panel senior vice chairperson said the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) will receive an additional P20.28 billion for the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) and the Government Internship Program.

"We must have funds on standby to support those who have crossed the poverty threshold to prevent them from falling back into poverty due to economic challenges. This budget is not just about numbers; it's about the lives we can uplift," Quimbo said.

### **Additional budgets for CHed, DepEd, AFP, DA, DOH**

In further efforts to support education, the House panel allocated P30.01 billion more to provide scholarships for underprivileged students pursuing tertiary education. This funding will be split evenly between the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) Tertiary Education Subsidy and Tulong Dunong programs.

"Investing in education is investing in the future. Every child deserves the chance to learn and succeed," said Quimbo, a former professor of economics at the University of the Philippines (UP) and a visiting professor at the Erasmus University Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

The Department of Education (DepEd) will benefit from an additional P7-billion budget for the construction of new school facilities and repair of existing ones. This funding aims to address the pressing need for improved educational infrastructure, particularly in underserved areas, Co said.

Meanwhile, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) will gain P8.44 billion in additional funding to increase subsistence allowances of military personnel. Once approved, the daily subsistence of soldiers will increase to P250 or a 67 percent hike from previous levels.

The extra funding for enlisted men's daily subsistence was initiated by House Speaker Martin Romualdez in response to appeals from military personnel. "Our soldiers deserve the extra allowance. This is a small price to pay for their sacrifice and for defending our country from both internal and external threats," Romualdez said.

The AFP will also get P3.2 billion more to complete the airport expansion on Pag-asa Island along with a shelter port in Lawak, Palawan. These are in support of efforts to defend the West Philippine Sea (WPS) against continuing Chinese intrusion.

"Investing in our military not only supports our soldiers but also strengthens our national security and sovereignty. This also underscores our commitment to protect our territorial integrity," Co added.

In a bid to enhance food security, the panel realigned P30 billion for the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Philippine Irrigation Network Piping System, solar-powered irrigation systems, and cold storage projects. "Food security is a priority for our nation, and these investments will help ensure that our farmers can thrive," the panel chairman stated.

Additionally, P44 billion has been added to the National Irrigation Administration's (NIA) budget for establishing pump irrigation and solar-driven pump irrigation projects.

The Department of Health (DOH) is set to receive an additional P56.87 billion, aimed at enhancing its Health Facility Enhancement Program, Medical Assistance for Indigent and Financially Incapacitated Patients Program, and improving specialty and legacy hospitals. A P1-billion budget has been earmarked for upgrading the University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital, a crucial facility in the country's healthcare system.

"Healthcare is a fundamental right, and we must ensure that all Filipinos have access to quality medical services," Co said.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/10/15/p292-23-b-realignments-in-2025-gab>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Protecting agricultural communities from economic sabotage

BY [J. ALBERT GAMBOA](#)

Oct 15, 2024 08:34 AM

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Last month, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed into law Republic Act No. 12022, or the “Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act of 2024.” This landmark measure aims to crack down on the smuggling of agricultural products. It elevates smuggling, profiteering, and hoarding of agricultural goods to the level of economic sabotage—which is now punishable by life imprisonment and heavy fines.

The passage of RA 12022 is a response to the growing threat posed by smuggling syndicates. Their illegal activities deprive the government of billions in revenue and destabilize key industries, including the tobacco sector. Its enactment is pivotal in the government’s relentless campaign against illicit tobacco and organized crime. This should send a clear message to smugglers that their profiteering days are over.

Tobacco smuggling affects not only consumers but also businesses. It siphons income away from tobacco-growing regions that rely on legitimate trade to fuel their local economies. Most affected are tobacco farmers and local government units (LGUs), which are dependent on their livelihood and the LGUs’ share of excise tobacco taxes. The new law helps protect agricultural communities from economic instability by cutting off illegal competition and preserving local jobs.

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of the Philippine economy, providing jobs for millions of Filipinos. Smuggling undercuts the livelihood of Filipino farmers, who have to compete with cheaper and illegal farm imports. RA 12022 targets the smuggling syndicates that have threatened these farmers’ ability to sell legal crops at competitive prices, and it empowers farmers to compete fairly.

Smuggled goods are often produced without adhering to safety or quality standards, exposing consumers to health risks. For instance, illicit cigarettes are known to contain hazardous materials. The new law seeks to remove these dangerous products from the market to ensure that consumers will only purchase items that comply with regulations. It increases consumer confidence in locally-made products and reduces the demand for fake or illicit goods.

RA 12022 prevents market distortions and the resulting imbalanced marketplace created by smugglers. It restores order to pricing and supply by curbing the illegal influx of cheap goods that drive prices down – hurting legitimate producers and disrupting the broader economy. Farmers can continue producing food crops without unfair competition from illicit imports, thus safeguarding national food security.

Investments and innovations in the agricultural sector will be encouraged under the new law, which can help modernize and improve agricultural output. Illegal trade undermines fair trade by allowing unscrupulous operators to evade taxes, regulations, and quality standards. RA 12022 brings back integrity to the agricultural market and ensures that all businesses—whether large or small—operate on an equal playing field under the rule of law.

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Leading tobacco players have lauded the passage of the new law. Among them is JTI Philippines General Manager John Freda, who noted that the illicit tobacco trade in the country has been growing at alarming levels and poses a significant threat to the nation's economy—especially the agricultural sector.

Freda said cigarette smuggling is a complex problem and not the victimless crime that it is perceived to be. It negatively impacts many sectors, and its proceeds often finance much bigger criminal activities such as terrorism, human trafficking, drug and weapons smuggling, and corruption in general. He considers the signing of RA 12022 a victory for farmers and consumers in the Philippines.

As the law comes into effect, it is crucial for law enforcement agencies and the general public to remain vigilant. Consumers must also take responsibility by supporting legal and safe products. It's now up to all stakeholders to ensure RA 12022's full and proper implementation. This would boost government efforts to protect the economy, safeguard public health, and secure much-needed revenues for vital services to the citizenry.

*J. Albert Gamboa is a Life Member of the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines (FINEX) and Vice-Chair of the FINEX Ethics Committee. The opinion expressed herein does not necessarily reflect the views of FINEX and the Manila Bulletin. #FinexPhils [www.finex.org.ph](http://www.finex.org.ph)*

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/10/15/protecting-agri-communities>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# House adds P292.2 billion to social services

[Delon Porcalla](#) - The Philippine Star

October 16, 2024 | 12:00am



Facade of the House of Representatives at the Batasan Complex in Quezon City.

The STAR / Michael Varcas, File photo

MANILA, Philippines — A four-person team tasked by Speaker Martin Romualdez to introduce amendments to the P6.352-trillion 2025 national budget has allocated an additional P292.2 billion for social services and food security.

“The additional funding is crucial for supporting those in need. We’re providing assistance to struggling families, especially during these challenging times,” House appropriations committee chairman Rep. Zaldy Co said.

In a statement, the panel chairman stressed the additional funding aims to address the pressing needs of vulnerable sectors, including financially challenged students, farmers, fisherfolk, soldiers, indigent families and those who barely passed the poverty threshold.

The Ako Bicol party-list representative said the “new funding” of P292.2 billion is on top of the P591.8 billion already set aside by the Department of Budget and Management for cash assistance to impoverished families.



Among the key enhancements in the 2025 General Appropriations Bill include the extra P39.8 billion for the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations under the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) designed to offer immediate support to those facing financial hardships.

Due to the wide acceptance and public clamor for the Ayuda para sa Kapos ang Kita Program (AKAP), the House earmarked another P39.8 billion for cash assistance targeting those who earn P21,000 and below per month.

The amount is three times bigger than the actual 2024 allocation of P13 billion.

Co said AKAP is designed for the “near poor” or “lower middle class” segment of the population, including minimum wage earners vulnerable to economic shocks like the sudden death of the household head, sickness, loss of jobs or runaway inflation that can easily send them back to poverty.

At the same time, the House allocated P3.4 billion for the Sustainable Livelihood Program for low-income families.

“We believe that empowering individuals through livelihood programs will help break the cycle of poverty,” Co added.

Meanwhile, panel member Marikina Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo stressed the importance of pro-active measures in the proposed budget.

She said the Department of Labor and Employment will receive an additional P20.28 billion for the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers and the Government Internship Program.

“We must have funds on standby to support those who have crossed the poverty threshold to prevent them from falling back into poverty due to economic challenges. This budget is not just about numbers; it’s about the lives we can uplift,” Quimbo said.

The Co-led panel also realigned P30 billion for the Department of Agriculture’s Philippine Irrigation Network Piping System, solar-powered irrigation systems and cold storage projects.

Additionally, P44 billion has been added to the National Irrigation Administration’s budget for establishing pump irrigation and solar-driven pump irrigation projects.

“Food security is a priority for our nation and these investments will help ensure that our farmers can thrive,” he stated.

A separate P30-billion additional funding was also allotted to support the education of the impoverished by way of providing scholarships for underprivileged but deserving students who want to pursue tertiary education.

According to Co, this funding will be “split evenly” between the Commission on Higher Education’s Tertiary Education Subsidy and Tulong Dunong programs.

“Investing in education is investing in the future. Every child deserves the chance to learn and succeed,” said Quimbo.

The Department of Education will benefit from an additional P7 billion for the construction of new school facilities and repair of existing ones.

This funding aims to address the pressing need for improved educational infrastructure, particularly in underserved areas, Co said.

## **DSWD politicizing aid?**

Meanwhile, the Office of the Vice President (OVP) is accusing the DSWD of sitting on thousands of applications for assistance the former referred to the agency.

Hinting at the DSWD’s supposed favoring of “other politicians” for its assistance payouts, the OVP branded Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian’s assertion that it never rejected its requests for assistance as “inaccurate and misleading.”

“While such statements may paint a picture of seamless coordination between our two offices, the reality on the ground tells a different story,” OVP director for operations Norman Baloro said in a statement.

On Monday, Gatchalian pushed back against Vice President Sara Duterte’s allegations that the agency kept on rejecting its endorsements for assistance because she was “an opponent of the administration.”

He said text messages between a DSWD assistant secretary and an OVP representative belie the claims Duterte made during a Senate deliberation on OVP’s 2025 budget two months ago.

“There had been several instances when OVP referrals were declined. An example of this was a request for assistance to an identified group of individuals whose livelihood were affected due to the African swine flu virus. The request was denied because the DSWD claimed that they cannot do ‘mass payouts’ and yet they are able to do it in other areas together with other politicians,” Baloro added.

Citing reports from its satellite offices, the OVP said there were 7,056 applications for individuals living in crisis situations and 2,597 for sustainable livelihood programs for residents in Negros and Panay Islands that the OVP endorsed to the DSWD and have yet to be approved.

Baloro said the beneficiaries of the OVP in Bohol, Cebu and Siquijor who have been entitled to assistance have yet to receive them.

“There is no clear explanation provided by the DSWD to the OVP-referred clients from the satellite offices on the delay or inaction on the requests,” Baloro said.

“To dismiss these unserved clients is to ignore the real challenges many Filipinos face in accessing social services. We call for DSWD’s immediate action to address these gaps and fulfill the government’s obligation to provide aid to every Filipino,” he added.

Gatchalian reiterated yesterday that the DSWD does not look at political color when extending assistance to the poor. – **Neil Jayson Servallos, Sheila Crisostomo**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/10/16/2392844/house-adds-p2922-billion-social-services>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# UP readies AI conference

**The Philippine Star**

October 16, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — As the 2024 Nobel Prize hailed scientific breakthroughs which made artificial intelligence (AI) technology possible, the University of the Philippines will gather the country's experts for a conference underscoring AI's profound impact on society, modern science and the research community.

The university-organized "AI Horizons PH '24: Conference on AI-Powered Research and Innovation" on Oct. 24 and 25 at the UP-BGC campus in Taguig City will also highlight AI-driven solutions that can potentially transform the Philippines' unique challenges in food security, sustainable agriculture, quality education, good governance, materials and energy and health and wellness.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences Nobel Committee honored physicist John Hopfield and computer scientist Geoffrey Hinton recently for their "foundational discoveries and inventions that enable machine learning with artificial neural networks."

It underlined how Hopfield's work on associative memory and Hinton's contributions to deep learning had laid the groundwork for today's AI revolution, from language translation to image recognition and beyond.

"The 2024 Nobel Prize in Physics shows that investing in AI is not just an option but an imperative for our nation's future," UP president Atty. Angelo Jimenez said.

Conference chair Dr. Prospero Naval, Jr. of the UP Diliman Department of Computer Science said the organizers "aim to ignite AI transformation in our country, championing a vision where AI is integrated into everything and made accessible to everyone."

"AI's transformative potential hinges on our commitment to digital infrastructure and data-driven strategies across all sectors," said Peter Sy, UP assistant vice president for Digital Transformation.

AI's pivotal role across many sectors will be discussed during the two-day conference.

Confirmed keynote speakers per track include Department of Education Secretary Sonny Angara, Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte, Department of Agriculture Undersecretary Allan Umali, Department of Health Undersecretary Glenn Matthew Baggao and executive director Enrico Paringit of the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Industry, Energy.

UP vice president for Academic Affairs Leo Cubillan and UP Diliman chancellor Carlo Vistan will deliver the closing remarks for Day 1 and Day 2 of the conference, respectively.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/10/16/2392744/readies-ai-conference>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Rice stocks up 7% year-on-year

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

October 16, 2024 | 12:00am



A worker inspects rice at a National Food Authority warehouse.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The country's rice stocks in September rose by almost seven percent on an annual basis to nearly 1.7 million metric tons (MT) on the back of higher inventories held by commercial entities and the National Food Authority (NFA).

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that nationwide rice stocks as of Sept. 1 stood at 1.66 million MT, 6.8 percent higher than the 1.55 million MT recorded in the same period last year.

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The increase was driven by higher rice inventories in commercial entities and NFA warehouses, according to the PSA report.

Rice stocks in commercial entities rose by 16.4 percent to 1.05 million MT from last year's 902,290 MT.

NFA warehouses, on the other hand, held 151,160 MT of rice during the reference month, almost triple the 50,950 MT it had in September last year.

Meanwhile, household rice stocks fell by 23.7 percent year-on-year to 457,820 MT from 600,170 MT last year.

In contrast, rice stocks declined on a monthly basis as recorded inventories in commercial warehouses and households fell, according to the PSA report.

Industry sources said the lower rice stocks could be attributed to private traders and importers opting to deplete their old stocks before replenishing these with newer ones, coupled with households unable to build up their stocks at home due to high retail prices.

Rice stocks in households declined month-on-month by 17 percent while inventory of commercial warehouses decreased by 9.8 percent versus August figures, based on PSA data. NFA rice stocks, meanwhile, remained relatively flat on a monthly basis.

“Of this month’s total rice stocks, 63.3 percent were from the commercial sector, 27.6 percent were from the households, and 9.1 percent were from the NFA depositories,” the PSA said.

The United States Department of Agriculture – Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) in Manila projected that NFA rice stocks would continue to increase in succeeding months while household stocks would sustain a decrease.

“FAS Manila forecasts that stocks of the commercial sector will decrease once old import stocks are liquidated, given tariff reductions until 2028,” it said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/10/16/2392757/rice-stocks-7-year-year>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# **P3.5M worth of illegally imported yellow onions from China seized**

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:00 AM October 16, 2024



INQUIRER.net stock images

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA), and Bureau of Customs (BOC) have seized 25 metric tons (MT) of fresh yellow onions from China worth P3.5 million that were brought into the country illegally. The contraband agricultural products were found in a 40-foot container van at the Manila South Harbor earlier this month.

BPI director Gerard Glen Panganiban said the confiscated goods were being held at the BOC's yard, adding that these would be destroyed after certain procedures were carried out. According to the BPI, JRA and Pearl Enterprise Inc. were found to have imported the commodity from China around the time the DA suspended the issuance of permits for onion importations.

The BPI's Plant Quarantine Service asked the BOC to issue a warrant of seizure-and-detention to allow the inspection of the container van's contents.

“It's impossible that this shipment of onions was imported using [a sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance] because we only issued ... import clearances in late



August,” Panganiban said. The sanitary and phytosanitary clearance, which certifies that imported agricultural goods adhere to standards, aims to protect the health of the local population, plants and animals, and prevent the spread of any diseases or pests.

“We hope that these confiscations will serve as a warning to unscrupulous traders and companies,” Panganiban said.

Earlier, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. authorized the importation of 16,000 MT of yellow onions until the end of the year to arrest the depletion of local supplies in time for the holiday season as well as stabilize retail prices.

The onion shipments are set to arrive in batches to avoid affecting the local harvest, which will start in January next year.

### **Blacklisted, sanctioned**

Earlier, the DA blacklisted LVM Grains Enterprises, Kysse Lishh Consumer Goods Trading and Golden Rays Consumer Goods Trading for the companies’ failure to secure the necessary sanitary and phytosanitary clearance for importing agricultural goods.

LVM Grains Enterprises was sanctioned for bringing into the country imported milled rice, cashew nuts and coffee.

Kysse Lishh Consumer Goods Trading and Golden Rays Consumer Goods Trading, on the other hand, were penalized after they were found to have imported onions and oranges without import clearances.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/252568/p3-5m-worth-of-illegally-imported-yellow-onions-from-china-seized>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

## **Social services, food security get higher share in 2025 budget – Co**

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 12:16 PM October 15, 2024

MANILA, Philippines — Social services and food security got a higher share in the House of Representatives version of the 2025 General Appropriations Bill (GAB), Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Elizaldy Co said on Tuesday.

Co, chairperson of the House Committee on Appropriations, said in a statement that P292.2 billion has been earmarked to “enhance social services, strengthen social safety nets, and ensure food security.”

These were part of the individual and institutional amendments tackled by the small committee tasked to finalize the P6.352 trillion GAB for 2025, which the House approved on the third and final reading last September 25.

“The additional funding is crucial for supporting those in need. We’re providing assistance to struggling families, especially during these challenging times,” Co said.

“The new funding is on top of the P591.8 billion already set aside by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) for cash assistance to impoverished families,” he added.

According to Co, part of the earmarked funds in the 2025 GAB is the extra P39.8 billion set aside for Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS), a program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) designed to provide immediate support to families struggling financially.

Another DSWD program included is the Ayuda sa Kapos ang Kita Program (AKAP), where P39.8 billion for cash assistance was allocated to workers earning P21,000 and below per month

Co said this is three times bigger than the 2024 allocation of P13 billion. Meanwhile, the House also allocated P3.4 billion for the Sustainable Livelihood Program for low-income families.

“We believe that empowering individuals through livelihood programs will help break the cycle of poverty,” Co said.

Appropriations senior vice chairperson and Marikina 2nd District Rep. Stella Quimbo meanwhile said that the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (Tupad) and the Government Internship Program — both under the Department of Labor and Employment — will get an additional P20.28 billion.

Meanwhile, P30.01 billion has been set aside for scholarships for underprivileged students in tertiary education, which was divided in half for the Commission on Higher Education’s Tertiary Education Subsidy and the other half for the Tulong Dunong programs.

For the Department of Education, there would be an additional P7 billion budget for the construction of new school facilities and the repair of existing ones.

“We must have funds on standby to support those who have crossed the poverty threshold to prevent them from falling back into poverty due to economic challenges. This budget is not just about numbers; it’s about the lives we can uplift,” Quimbo said. “Investing in education is investing in the future. Every child deserves the chance to learn and succeed.”

“This funding aims to address the pressing need for improved educational infrastructure, particularly in underserved areas,” Co added.

## **Defense, food security boost**

Co also touted the small committee's decision to realign P30 billion for the Department of Agriculture's Philippine Irrigation Network Piping System, solar-powered irrigation systems, and cold storage projects.

Aside from this, the appropriations chairperson said P44 billion has been added to the National Irrigation Administration's budget to establish pump irrigation and solar-driven pump irrigation sites.

"Food security is a priority for our nation, and these investments will help ensure that our farmers can thrive," he said.

Co said that House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez initiated the call for extra funding for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), particularly for the subsistence allowances of military personnel.

Under the GAB, Co said AFP gets an additional P8.44 billion in funding, which, if approved, will increase to P250 or a 67 percent hike from previous levels.

An additional P3.2 billion would also be allocated to the AFP to ensure the completion of the Pag-asa Island airport expansion and a shelter port in Lawak, Palawan

"Our soldiers deserve the extra allowance. This is a small price to pay for their sacrifice and for defending our country from both internal and external threats," Romualdez said.

"Investing in our military not only supports our soldiers but also strengthens our national security and sovereignty. This also underscores our commitment to protect our territorial integrity," Co added.

Meanwhile, the Department of Health will get an additional P56.87 billion, which primarily enhance its Health Facility Enhancement Program, Medical Assistance for

Indigent and Financially Incapacitated Patients Program, and the improvement of specialty and legacy hospitals.

Also, P1 billion has been allocated to upgrade the University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital.

“Healthcare is a fundamental right, and we must ensure that all Filipinos have access to quality medical services,” Co noted.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1992740/social-services-food-security-get-higher-share-in-2025-budget-co>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# **Figaro forges strategic partnerships to promote sustainable food security**

[INQUIRER.net BrandRoom](#) / 06:32 PM October 15, 2024

Figaro Innovation and Development Inc. (FIDI), a subsidiary of Figaro Coffee Group, is pleased to announce the signing of a Mutual Non-Disclosure Agreement, marking the beginning of a strategic partnership aimed at boosting local agricultural development and ensuring food security together with San Jose Workers' Multi-Purpose Cooperative (SJWMPC), and the Batangas Organic and Natural Farming Agriculture Cooperative (BONFAC).

The signing event took place on October 11, 2024, in San Jose, Batangas, and brought together leaders from FIDI, SJWMPC, and BONFAC. The initiative is in line with the ongoing efforts to promote sustainable agriculture and provide innovative solutions to food security challenges in the Philippines. This milestone also coincided with the celebration of World Egg Day, emphasizing the importance of local food production.

L-R: Ms. Ianni Klarisse Conde (FIDI Strategic Partnership Officer), Mr. Ace Azarraga (FCG Brand and Partnership Director), Ms. Cecille Aldueza Virtucio (Chairperson of SJWMPC and BONFAC), Mr. Henry James Sison (CEO BONFAC), Ms. Lissa Jardin (Agro Digital PH CFO)

Ms. Cecille Aldueza Virtucio, Chairperson of SJWMPC and BONFAC, emphasized the significance of the new commissary and cold storage facility, stating:

“Today, in celebration of World Egg Day, we once again rise to the challenge of contributing to food security. The inauguration of the SJWMPC Commissary, Meat Cutting, and Cold Storage Facility— a project realized in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and the National Meat Inspection Service—marks an important step forward. With a focus on chicken and eggs, we aim to provide affordable, nutritious food to workers and families, thereby addressing food inflation. Our partnership with FIDI strengthens our resolve to create progress through innovation and collaboration.”

Mr. Ace Azarraga, Brand and Partnership Director at FCG, expressed excitement about the collaboration: “We are thrilled to take this monumental step in connecting our local farmers with Figaro Innovation and Development Inc. Supporting the coffee farmers of Batangas and other provinces, as well as our agricultural communities across the Philippines, aligns perfectly with Figaro Foundation’s mission. This partnership signifies the beginning of a larger initiative to uplift and empower farmers nationwide, ensuring sustainable growth for the local farming industry.”

Mr. Jose Petroño Español III, President of FIDI, also conveyed his congratulations: “With the recent celebration of National Farmers Day and the inauguration of the food processing facility by BONFAC farmers and the SJWMPC, we commend the men and women driving the success of these organizations. Figaro will support their future endeavors to develop an integrated food processing and production value chain. Together, we will elevate Filipino farmers, bringing their produce to both local and global markets. Our shared values of promoting homegrown brands will serve as the foundation for a sustainable future.”

The partnership sets the stage for the cooperative development of food processing, ensuring Filipino farmers’ products are distributed to wider domestic and international markets. The collaboration will also focus on addressing food inflation and empowering farmers with innovative solutions.

***ADVT.***

***This article is brought to you by Figaro Coffee.***

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**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Philippine rice inventory up by 6.8%

October 15, 2024 | 7:49 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/ MICHAEL VARCAS

THE national rice inventory rose 6.8% year on year to 1.66 million metric tons (MMT), the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported, citing preliminary data as of Sept. 1.

The national inventory consisted of 63.3% held by commercial traders, 27.6% by households, and 9.1% by the National Food Authority (NFA),” it said in a report.

Rice held by the NFA more than doubled to 151,160 MT, while commercial rice stocks rose 16.4% to 1.05 MMT.

On the other hand, rice stocks held by households amounted to 457,820 MT for the period, dropping 23.7% from a year earlier.

Month on month, the rice inventory fell 11.2%.

The PSA also said the corn inventory declined 22.1% year on year to 625,120 MT during the period. Corn held by commercial establishments was 591,980 MT, down 19.9%, while household corn was around 33,130 MT, down 47.8%. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/10/15/628043/philippine-rice-inventory-up-by-6-8/>



**REMATE:**

# Tolentino, nanawagan na palakasin ang National Meat Inspection Service

October 15, 2024 15:00



MANILA, Philippines- Nanawagan si Senate Majority Leader Francis 'Tol' Tolentino ng malawakang suporta para sa National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) ng Department of Agriculture (DA) para siguruhin ang kaligtasan at kalidad ng mga produktong karne ng bansa.

Sa paggunita sa 31st Meat Safety Consciousness Week na ginanap sa Quezon City, iginiit din ni Tolentino ang pagpapalakas sa NMIS sa harap ng mga seryosong hamon, gaya ng pagkalat ng African Swine Fever (ASF), at paghina ng lokal na produksyon.

Sa kanyang talumpati sa mga opisyal at lider sa sektor ng agrikultura, inihalimbawa ng senador ang mahuhusay na meat inspection systems ng Chile at Argentina, na nagbigay-daan para manguna ang mga ito bilang meat producers at exporters.

Dagdag nya, susi ang pagpapalakas sa NMIS para ang Pilipinas ay makalikha din ng ligtas at dekalidad na karne, gaya ng baboy, manok, at baka.

Pero batid ng senador ang mga isyung kinakaharap ng NMIS, kung kaya't inisa-isa nya ang mga posibleng hakbang para maiangat ang kalidad at produksyon ng bansa.

“Una, dapat dagdagan ang kolaborasyon ng NMIS at Department of Health (DOH). Ikalawa, kailangan nito ng suporta mula sa Department of Science and Technology (DOST). Ikatlo, dapat dagdagan ang pondo ng ahensya. At pang-apat, dapat nating hangarin na maging meat exporter katulad ng Chile at Argentina,” paliwanag nya.

Bukod sa DOH at DOST, dapat din umanong tulongan ang NMIS ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Presidential Communications Office (PCO), at Department of Budget and Management (DBM) para mapabuti ang mga sistema at kampanya nito.

Magugunita na una nang nanawagan si Tolentino sa gobyerno na magdeklara ng state of calamity para masawata ang pagkalat ng ASF, na lubhang nagpadapa sa produksyon ng lokal na hog raisers.

Nang tanungin ng mga mamamahayag kung dapat pa rin bang igiit ang state of calamity, itinugon ng senador: “Kahit walang deklarasyon, marami na ring hakbang na naisagawa ang gobyerno, gaya ng pagbili ng mga bakuna at pagpapataas ng public awareness. Pero hindi basta-basta mapipigilan ang ASF. Nasa Pangulo ang desisyon, pero kung may state of calamity, ay maaari ring magdeklara ng price freeze ang gobyerno para maprotektahan ang mga mamimili.” **RNT**

<https://remate.ph/tolentino-nanawagan-na-palakasin-ang-national-meat-inspection-service/>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# **DA lifts import ban on beef from the UK**

**BEEF from the United Kingdom is now safe to eat and the Department of Agriculture's (DA) has lifted a temporary ban on imports of live cattle and meat, as well as other products, from that country.**

**Memorandum Order (MO) 45, signed by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., removes the import ban, first imposed in May due to a confirmed case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or mad cow disease.**

**A second memo, issued on May 30, restricted the entry of live cattle and meat products from the UK to prevent the spread of the disease. The ban covered live cattle, meat, bovine processed animal proteins and semen derived from cattle.**

**The ban was revoked based on an official report the UK submitted to the World Organization for Animal Health.**

**"Several documentary requirements were requested by the Philippines to veterinary authorities of the United Kingdom in order to assess the public health control measures applied and implemented," Tiu Laurel said in MO 45.**

**Quoting the UK report, the memo said, "The case has ended with resolved status and no additional outbreaks after 07 August 2024... Upon careful evaluation of the submitted documents and relevant information, none of the products from the case of BSE has entered the production system nor has been exported to the Philippines."**

**Data from the DA's Bureau of Animal Industry showed the UK shipped 3.5 million kilograms (kg) of cattle meat to the Philippines from January to August, or 2.80 percent of total beef imports in 2023.**

**The UK also delivered 17.19 million kg of poultry and livestock.**

**Brazil remained the Philippines' top meat supplier with 313.53 million kg, or 34.5 percent of the country's total meat imports.**

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/10/16/business/top-business/da-lifts-import-ban-on-beef-from-the-uk/1985063>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# Food waste crisis and PHL's struggle to eliminate hunger

BusinessMirror  
October 16, 2024

AS the clock winds down to the 2030 deadline of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), many nations remain at a loss as to how to meet their commitment to eliminate hunger. The State of Food Security and Nutrition (SOFI) released by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) showed that around 733 million people faced hunger in 2023, equivalent to one in 11 people globally. The annual report warned that the world is falling significantly short of achieving SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by 2030 and that the levels of undernourishment are comparable to those seen in 2008-2009.

Despite these stark realities, nations continue to waste tons of food that could have fed the hungry. FAO noted that over 13 percent of food is lost globally in the supply chain after harvest on farms and before the retail stages. UNEP statistics indicated that food waste, occurring at retail, food and service and household levels, stands at 19 percent.

Countries including the Philippines could not seem to find viable solutions to stop food items from ending up in garbage bins or rotting in fields (See, "Cut onion harvest losses to boost local supply," in the BusinessMirror, February 2, 2023). While the government has crafted several roadmaps, most of which seek to improve the productivity of crops usually grown in the Philippines, the country is making little progress in terms of reducing postharvest losses. For one, the government estimated postharvest losses in rice at around 500,000 metric tons per year.

The scarcity of data that would help farmers plan their production activities, especially at the local level, and the lack of farm-to-market roads have also contributed to food waste. Local farmers would sometimes throw away their harvest due to the lack of buyers. These are farmers who are not equipped to add value to their produce, which would allow them to earn more from their crops.

Agencies responsible for resolving these issues now have the necessary funds for dealing with them. Since the international rice price crisis in 2008, billions of pesos have been poured into the rice sector and the agriculture sector in general is now getting more money from the national government. Moreover, the rice tariffication law has expanded the pool of funds that will enable policymakers to implement the necessary reforms to prevent postharvest losses and improve milling recovery rate.

The Philippines is one of the countries that has committed to achieving the SDGs, including the elimination of hunger, and it has six years to meet the UN goal. However, the state will not be able to achieve this target by 2030 or even beyond this deadline if policymakers will continue to ignore the necessity of dealing with food waste. With or without international initiatives such as the SDGs, the state must put an end to practices that see food going to trash bins or landfills instead of the tables of Filipino families.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/10/16/food-waste-crisis-and-phls-struggle-to-eliminate-hunger/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **BFAR: Chinese militia ship ‘sideswipes’ vessel off Pagasa**

Malou Talosig-Bartolome  
October 15, 2024

A CHINESE militia vessel “deliberately” hit a Philippine government vessel patrolling near Pagasa Island last October 11, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) said.

BFAR said their vessel BRP Datu Cabaylo (MMOV 3001) was approaching Pag-asa (Sandy) Cay 4 when a Chinese militia vessel with bow number 00108 “deliberately sideswiped” the starboard bow (front right portion) of BRP Datu Cabaylo.

The same militia vessel also “conducted dangerous maneuvers and tried to block the path” of another BFAR vessel.

“These dangerous maneuvers caused the sideswiping and

collision with the BFAR vessel, which sustained minor dents in its starboard bow,” BFAR said.

The brief collision occurred about 5.1 nautical miles south-southwest of Pagasa Island from one of the four cays of Pagasa Island, within the Philippine 12 nautical miles territorial zone.

Pagasa Island is the biggest rock feature occupied by the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea.

BFAR maintained its position despite the brief encounter with a Chinese militia vessel and was “able to continue” with its maritime patrol mission in the Pagasa cays. The two vessels are now docked at the sheltered port of Pagasa.

“We commend the officers and crew of the BRP Datu Cabaylo (MMOV 3001) as they continue to perform their duty, in line with the mandate of BFAR, to uphold Philippine jurisdiction and rights over its territorial waters and exclusive economic zone,” BFAR said.

In Beijing, China’s Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning confirmed the collision.

“As far as I know, the actual situation is that the Philippine government ship sailed in a dangerous manner in the waters under China’s jurisdiction and collided with a Chinese fishing boat operating normally in the waters,” Mao said.

Beijing blamed Manila again for this incident.

“Philippines violated China’s sovereignty and seriously threatened the safety of Chinese fishing boats and personnel. China urges the Philippines to earnestly respect China’s territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea and stop any actions that may complicate the situation,” Mao said in Mandarin.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/10/15/bfar-chinese-militia-shipsideswipes-vessel-off-pagasa/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# DA lifts import ban on UK's live cattle, byproducts

Ada Pelonia  
October 15, 2024



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has lifted the import ban on live cattle and its byproducts from the United Kingdom.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. issued Memorandum Order (MO) 45, which rescinded the temporary import ban slapped on the commodity last June following the detection of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as mad cow disease in the country.

Laurel said in MO 45 that based on the official report of the UK in the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the case ended with resolved status. It added that no additional outbreaks were recorded after August 7.



“Upon careful evaluation of the submitted documents and relevant information, none of the products from the case of BSE has entered the production system nor has been exported to the Philippines,” the order read.

It also noted that due to negligible BSE risk, “the acceptance of all in-transit and incoming shipments from the United Kingdom may commence provided with verified equivalence from the United Kingdom Veterinary Authority.”

Based on MO 45, the UK also provided evidence to show that food safety measures are in place in different accredited foreign meat establishments (FMEs) and are equivalent to the guidelines established by the Philippines.

### Inspection of meat plants

In June, the DA began the inspection of meat plants in eight countries to ensure that their products meet Manila’s standards.

Agriculture Undersecretary Deogracias Victor Savellano told the BusinessMirror in an earlier interview on Wednesday that inspection teams are bound for eight meat-exporting countries.

“The teams have already been given travel orders to inspect (meat plants) and any time this year, they may travel to those countries,” Savellano said in a mix of English and Filipino.

Laurel had issued a special order which instructed eight inspection teams to travel to Argentina, Uruguay, India, Russia, Denmark, Spain, Sweden and the United States for the accreditation of FMEs.

According to the DA, the teams would consist of border control and animal health experts from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) to conduct on-site inspection and validation of documents of the FMEs.

The department said this would ensure that meat and meat products exported to the Philippines are safe for public consumption and do not pose a threat to the domestic livestock and poultry industry.

The DA also implements a comprehensive set of rules, regulations, and procedures guided by appropriate issuances governing pre-border measures, particularly in the accreditation of FMEs that may be allowed to export meat and meat products into the country.

“The government has to check the quality, their facilities, and how they source their animals. There is a checklist to ensure that these establishments implement the food safety measures that the government requires,” Savellano said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/10/15/da-lifts-import-ban-on-uks-live-cattle-byproducts/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# Customs, BPI seize P3.5-M smuggled onions at South Harbor

Ada Pelonia

October 15, 2024

The Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) and the Bureau of Customs (BOC) on Tuesday seized 25 metric tons (MT) of smuggled yellow onions worth P3.5 million at Manila's South Harbor.

According to the Department of Agriculture (DA), the container van arrived at the Port of Manila on board the vessel Green Pacific in July. The shipment was imported from China by JRA and Pearl Enterprise, Inc.

The DA said it was during this time when Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. ordered BPI to suspend the issuance of permits for onion imports owing to ample supply.

Upon verification through the Inward Foreign Manifest, BPI-Plant Quarantine Service at Manila's South Harbor requested BOC for a Warrant of Seizure and Detention to inspect the container's contents. The inspection yielded 25 MT of fresh yellow onions.

"It's impossible that this shipment of onions were imported using an SPIC because we only issued sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances in late August," BPI director Gerald Glen Panganiban said in a statement.

He said BPI has improved the inspection of imported agricultural commodities on orders of Laurel to "enforce our biosecurity measures and keep out these smuggled articles to uphold the interest of our farmers and protect public health."

"We remain steadfast in our support to the newly signed Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act," Panganiban said.

“We hope that these confiscations will serve as a warning to unscrupulous traders and companies that the DA and BPI are fully committed to cracking down on these illegal trade practices that endanger not only public health but undermine the livelihood of our farmers,” he added.

In August, Laurel ordered the importation of 16,000 MT of yellow onions due to a depleted supply. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/29/phl-to-import-limited-quantity-of-yellow-onions/>)

According to the agriculture chief, the imported volume of the commodity would arrive in batches. He noted that the importation scheme would ensure that the arrival of yellow onions from abroad would not affect the prices of the existing stocks of red onions

Laurel said all imported onions should arrive by December so it would not coincide with the start of the local harvest.

Data from the BPI showed that the country’s yellow onion inventory as of October 4 was at 1,859.27 metric tons (MT). Of these, 1,799.22 were imported. The inventory of red onion, however, was much higher at 89,490.47 MT.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/10/15/customs-bpi-seize-p3-5-m-smuggled-onions-at-south-harbor/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **NMIS needs support so it can ensure safe meat items**

Butch Fernandez  
October 15, 2024

SENATE Majority Leader Francis Tolentino is tapping multi-agency support for the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in a move to ensure the safety and quality of Philippine meat products.

At the celebration of the 31st Meat Safety Consciousness Week in Quezon City, Tolentino also stressed the urgency of strengthening the NMIS amid serious threats to local producers, such as the spread of the African Swine Fever (ASF), and declining domestic production.

Speaking before agriculture officials and stakeholders, Tolentino cited the impressive meat inspection systems of Chile and Argentina, considered among the world's top meat producers and exporters.

Only by strengthening the NMIS, the senator stressed, “can the country strive to become a source of safe and quality meat products.”

Still, Tolentino said he is also “fully aware of and acknowledge the many challenges faced by NMIS.”

Thus, the senator also emphasized the need “to raise the quality of domestically produced meat.”

Tolentino batted for four priorities: “One, there should be greater collaboration with the Department of Health (DOH). Two, there should be greater support from the Department of Science and Technology (DOST). Three, I believe the NMIS should be well-funded. And four, we should aspire to be like Chile and Argentina by becoming exporters of our meat products.”

Besides collaborating with the DOH and DOST, the senator suggested that NMIS work actively with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Presidential Communications Office (PCO), and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to enhance its systems and branding.

Asked in a media interview if the state of calamity should still be pursued, the senator responded: “Even without the declaration, the government is already making efforts, like vaccine procurement and increasing public awareness. But he reminds that “ASF is not something that can be easily stopped. It’s up to the President to make the decision, because with a state of calamity, a national price freeze can be imposed to protect consumers.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/10/15/nmis-needs-support-so-it-can-ensure-safe-meat-items/>

**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:**

# National Meat Inspection Service, palakasin

October 16, 2024 | 12:00am



Pork products are on display for sale in Marikina Public Market on August 13, 2024.

MANILA, Philippines — Nanawagan si Senate Majority Leader Francis ‘Tol’ Tolentino ng malawakang suporta para sa National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) ng Department of Agriculture (DA) para siguruhin ang kaligtasan at kalidad ng mga produktong karne ng bansa.

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Magugunita na una nang nanawagan si Tolentino sa gobyerno na magdeklara ng state of calamity para masawata ang pagkalat ng ASF, na lubhang nagpadapa sa produksyon ng lokal na hog raisers.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/10/16/2392818/national-meat-inspection-service-palakasin>