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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Philippines eyes expansion of agricultural exports to Italy

BY JEL SANTOS

Oct 21, 2024 05:05 PM



The Philippines is eyeing the expansion of agricultural exports to Italy to meet the rising demand for local products in the European country, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Monday, Oct. 21.

DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said this was an offshoot of the meeting with Italian Minister of Agriculture Francesco Lollobrigida on World Food Day, Oct. 16 wherein the rising demand for Philippine products in Italy was discussed.

The demand, laurel said, was driven by the presence of over 200,000 Filipinos in Italy.

The DA chief said he is optimistic about “expanding exports to include tuna, pineapples, frozen fish, carrageenan, and desiccated coconut.”

“Philippine agricultural exports to Italy in 2023 totaled \$129 million, led by crude coconut oil,” the DA noted.

According to the agriculture department, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from the Philippines have already made inroads, promoting Philippine cuisine and food products in Italy.

The DA acknowledged the role of the Filipino community and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce in Italy in raising awareness and stimulating demand for such exports.

Lolobrigida, meanwhile, invited skilled Filipino fishermen to enhance Italy's fishing industry.

Beyond exports, both countries are working on a draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) aimed at promoting agricultural modernization in the Philippines.

Laurel stressed the importance of Italy's world-class agricultural machinery and expertise in water management, which could help the Philippines address key challenges in its agricultural sector.

"Italy's agricultural machinery industry is world-class, and the Philippines can greatly benefit from this expertise as we modernize our agricultural sector," said Laurel.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/10/21/philippines-eyes-expansion-of-exports-to-italy>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Villar asks DA P7-B funding for RCEF amid rice tariff cut

**BY DHEL NAZARIO**

Oct 21, 2024 02:45 PM

Senator Cynthia A. Villar asked the Department of Agriculture (DA) on Monday, Oct. 21, to allocate P7 billion to finance the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) under the proposed 2025 national budget.



Sen. Cynthia A. Villar asks the Department of Agriculture (DA) to allocate P7-billion to finance the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) as she submits the agency's budget for plenary deliberations during Monday's hearing, October 21, 2024. (Senate PRIB photo)

She said this as she wrapped up the Senate finance subcommittee's hearing of the agency's proposed P200.19 billion budget for 2025 and deemed it submitted for plenary deliberations.

"I will ask the DA and the mother committee to give me P7 billion to finance the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund because they brought tariff on rice from 35 percent to 15 percent," Villar explained.

"There's a shortage of P7 billion so I want the DA to put that in the budget so that we will have P30 billion for RCEF," she added.

To recall, Villar sponsored the extension and amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), or Republic Act No. 11203, that created the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) from tariffs collected on imported rice.

This also includes increasing the annual appropriation to P30 billion from P10 billion for the RCEF, which will be distributed to farmers in the form of modern machinery, inbred seeds, training, and financial assistance.

Villar, who also chairs the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Food, and Agrarian Reform, presented in plenary on Sept. 25 the Bicameral Conference Report on the disagreeing provisions of Senate Bill No. 2779 and House Bill No. 10381, also known as the proposed Agricultural Tariffication Act.

On the same day, the Senate ratified the Bicameral Report on the Proposed Agricultural Tariffication Act which is set to be signed by President Marcos.

Aside from this, Villar also addressed some of DA's requests in its wishlist regarding its budget. She said that they would allow P50 million for the Rubber Institute subject to the negotiation with the mother committee.

For the Bureau of Animal Industry, they will source their funds from the proposed Livestock Bill as well as the support to food safety, for the Philippine Carabao Center and the National Dairy Authority.

This also goes for the Bureau of Plant Industry which will get its funding from the proposed Corn Bill.

In terms of the support to sustainable management of major agricultural crops, Villar said they will retain the existing budget and it will not be transferred to the funding for high-value crops.

On the other hand, Villar said that the proposed National Fisheries Research and Development Study is rejected except for the salt fund which will be derived from tariffs on imported salt.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/10/21/villar-asks-da-p7-b-funding>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Figaro forges strategic partnerships to promote sustainable food security

BY MANILA BULLETIN

Oct 21, 2024 10:15 PM

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.



Ianni Klarisse Conde, FIDI Strategic Partnership Officer; Ace Azarraga, FCG Brand and Partnership Director; Cecille Aldueza Virtucio, SJWMPC and BONFAC Chairperson; Henry James Sison, CEO of BONFAC; and Lissa Jardin, Agro Digital PH CFO

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."



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."



Jose Petroñio 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.

[https://mb.com.ph/2024/10/21/figaro-strategic-partnerships-sustainable-food-security#google\\_vignette](https://mb.com.ph/2024/10/21/figaro-strategic-partnerships-sustainable-food-security#google_vignette)



**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Groups call for action on climate change, food security in QC protest

BY HANNAH NICOL

Oct 21, 2024 01:52 PM

Protesters trooped to the Department of Agriculture (DA) office along Elliptical Road, Quezon City, on Monday, October 21, as part of an Asia-wide protest, to urge Asian governments to build a sustainable, climate-resilient food system for everyone.



Protesters led by the Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD), trooped to the Department of Agriculture office along Elliptical Road in Quezon City as part of an Asia-wide protests calling on Asian governments to build sustainable, climate-resilient food systems that ensure adequate and affordable food for all on October 21, 2024. (Mark Balmores)

The rallyists underscored the urgent need for immediate action as climate change intensifies, leading to increasingly severe typhoons, floods, and landslides.

These disasters, they said, not only damage agriculture but also heighten food insecurity, resulting in billions of pesos in economic losses.

The protest was led by the Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD), a regional alliance of people's movements, community organizations, coalitions, non-government organizations, and networks.

The group aims to advance collective campaigns and joint actions to address common struggles in regional and global arenas.

APMDD also seeks to change the processes, policies, and structures of governments and intergovernmental institutions, contributing to the transformation of national and international economic and financial systems.



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Protesters wore "salakots" or native hats and held banners and placards demanding "people's rights to food, land, and water," "Kumakalam na sikmura, solusyunan (Empty stomachs, provide a solution)," "Stop water privatization, No to Reclamation!" and "Krisis sa Klima, Krisis sa Pagkain (Climate Crisis, Food Crisis)."



**Protesters led by the Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD), trooped to the Department of Agriculture office along Elliptical Road in Quezon City as part of an Asia-wide protests calling on Asian governments to build sustainable, climate-resilient food systems that ensure adequate and affordable food for all on October 21, 2024. (Mark Balmores)**

The group also displayed a protest prop resembling a boat with the message “Produksyon, hindi importasyon! (Production, not importation!).”

The Partido Lakas ng Masa (PLM), Kababaihan sa Oriang, SANLAKAS, the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJI), and Kilusan para sa Kabuhayan, Kalusugan, Kalikasan, at Katiyakan sa Paninirahan (K4K) also joined in the protest.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/10/21/protest-groups-call-for-actions-on-climate-change-food-security>



**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Italy may tap skilled Philippines fishermen for work

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

October 22, 2024 | 12:00am



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. recently met with Italian Minister of Agriculture Francesco Lollobrigida recently to discuss bilateral agricultural relationship between the two countries.

The STAR / Val Rodriguez, File photo

MANILA, Philippines — The government is keen on collaborating with Italy to provide opportunities for Filipino fisherfolk, especially for possible employment in the European country’s fishing industry.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. recently met with Italian Minister of Agriculture Francesco Lollobrigida recently to discuss bilateral agricultural relationship between the two countries.

One of the discussions between the ministers was the possibility of having skilled Filipino fisherfolk working in Italy.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said Lollobrigida extended Italy’s invitation for skilled fishermen to enhance the European country’s fishing industry while providing “valuable” opportunities for Filipino workers.

During the meeting, Tiu Laurel expressed optimism in expanding the country’s agricultural exports to Italy, including tuna, frozen fish, pineapples, carrageenan and

desiccated coconut, amid growing demand for these products driven by rising Filipino population in the European country.

Last year, the country shipped \$129 million worth of agricultural products to Italy led by coconut oil, according to the DA.

“The growing Filipino community in Italy, now estimated at 200,000, has increased demand for Philippine food products. Small and medium-sized enterprises have formed the Philippine Chamber of Commerce in Italy, promoting Philippine cuisine among Italians,” the DA said yesterday.

The agriculture chief also urged his Italian counterpart to entice Italian businesses to invest in the Philippine agriculture sector, particularly in the field of infrastructure and technology that could help modernize domestic farming practices.

Tiu Laurel pointed out that Italian firms can contribute through smart agriculture technologies and irrigation systems, aligning with the Philippines’ goals of agro-industrialization and climate-resilient agriculture.

“Italy’s agricultural machinery industry is world-class, and the Philippines can greatly benefit from this expertise as we modernize our agricultural sector,” he said.

The two countries also agreed on a draft memorandum of understanding that would boost productivity and agro-industrialization in the Philippines.

Part of the discussions was a potential collaboration between the government and Italy’s national federation of agricultural machinery manufacturers, for the adoption of Italian made machinery in the country’s agriculture sector.

“Our partnership in agriculture reflects the shared vision of our two nations. We look forward to finalizing our agreements and ensuring sustainable, inclusive, and resilient food systems,” Tiu Laurel said.

The DA noted that the Philippines and Italy have maintained a bilateral relationship for at least 77 years now.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/10/22/2394221/italy-may-tap-skilled-philippines-fishermen-work>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# DA expands ASF vaccination trial in commercial farms

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

October 22, 2024 | 12:00am



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

STAR / Ryan Baldemor

MANILA, Philippines — Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has expanded the controlled vaccination against African swine fever (ASF), to include commercial farms amid low participation rate among backyard hog raisers.

To be included in the ASF vaccination trial are commercial farms covered by the integrated national swine production initiatives for the recovery and expansion (INSPIRE) program of the government.

Tiu Laurel issued Administrative Circular (AC) No. 8, which provided supplemental guidelines on the use of ASF vaccines procured by the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Bureau of Animal Industry.

Earlier, the DA issued AC No. 5, which prioritized the vaccination of healthy hogs raised in backyard or small farms in villages with no reported ASF cases and within designated red zones as well as in cities or municipalities classified under pink or buffer zones.

“The low participation of backyard hog farms presents a significant challenge, making it necessary to expedite the vaccination in commercial farms and swine herds covered by the INSPIRE program to increase the vaccination rate, achieve the desired coverage and facilitate the assessment of the vaccine’s efficacy,” Tiu Laurel said.

The DA has allocated P350 million for the procurement of 600,000 doses of ASF vaccine.

Of the figure, 10,000 vaccine doses were purchased through emergency procurement amid ASF outbreaks in several areas in Batangas in August.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/10/22/2394272/da-expands-asf-vaccination-trial-commercial-farms>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# ASF vaccination expands to bigger piggeries

As 'low participation' from small farms stall program

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:04 AM October 22, 2024

Massive disinformation is preventing small backyard raisers from volunteering their hogs to vaccination, slowing down the government's efforts to stem the spread of the African swine fever (ASF).

With small farms continuing to express fear the vaccine may not be effective as earlier reported, the Department of Agriculture (DA) would now be expanding the program to big, commercial farms to cover as many pigs as possible.

"The low participation rate of 'smallhold' farms presents a significant challenge, making it necessary to expedite the vaccination program for commercial farms and swine herds covered by the Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion (Inspire) Program," Administrative Order No. 8 read.

The Inspire program was launched at the height of the ASF outbreak in the country to boost local hog output, and stabilize pork supply through calibrated repopulation and production expansion.

The DA provided additional guidelines as Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. ordered the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) last week to refine its vaccination protocols.

"We're hopeful that impending changes to the vaccination protocol will finally fast-track the vaccine rollout and finally address our problem with this stubborn virus," the DA chief said.

Tiu Laurel noted many raisers were hesitant to join the ASF vaccine rollout amid concerns their pigs would be culled if tests showed the animals were infected.

## **Year-end target**

Tiu Laurel and several officials of the DA, the BAI, the Food and Drug Administration and vaccine distributor KPP Powers Commodities are also facing graft charges over the alleged illegal importation of untested vaccines.

The DA was targeting to procure and distribute 600,000 vaccines from the Vietnamese supplier by the end of this year.

It started the vaccine rollout in Lobo, Batangas, ground zero of the ASF outbreak, which has shown that the hogs developed sufficient antibodies to combat the virus.

The latest BAI tally showed 10 regions and 25 provinces have active ASF cases as of Oct. 18.

Under the additional guidelines, interested commercial farms should submit a letter of intent to the concerned DA regional field office and submit requirements to both local governments and the DA regional office.

Personnel from the BAI and the provincial veterinary office will inspect the farm to assess its biosecurity measures and readiness to participate in the vaccination drive. INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/485820/asf-vaccination-expands-to-bigger-piggeries>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Senate panel approves proposed 2025 Dept. of Agriculture budget

By: [Dianne Sampang](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 02:07 PM October 21, 2024



MANILA, Philippines — The proposed 2025 budget of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and attached agencies and corporations was approved by the Senate subcommittee on finance on Monday.

Senator Cynthia Villar, who presided over the budget hearing, said that the proposed budget will now be submitted to the Senate plenary. The committee approved a total of P178.273 billion for the department.

The hearing that lasted for four minutes breezed through with no questions raised by the senator herself, other senators, and officials from DA.

Further, the senator bared the budget requests and instructions for other attached agencies and corporations.

“We will just ask the mother committee to provide Rubber Research Institute 50 million and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources 150 million,” Villar said in the hearing.

She added that the support for food safety, the Philippine Carabao Center, the National Dairy Committee, and “sure money” for the Bureau of Animal Industry will be coming from the livestock bill.

In August, the Senate approved on the third and final reading the Senate Bill No. 2558 or the Act Strengthening Livestock, Poultry, and Dairy Industry, which was authored by Villar, Senators Jinggoy Estrada, Lito Lapid, and Sonny Angara.

**Meanwhile, the senator said that the budget for the National Fisheries Research and Development is rejected except for the salt fund.**

“The National Fisheries Research and Development Study, this is rejected except the salt fund which we will derive from the tariff on imported salt. We have the salt bill and you demand the tariff from the imported salt and use this for your development of the salt industry,” Villar added.

Senator Nancy Binay previously said during the DA budget hearing that the department should have a “specific line item” for African Swine Fever (ASF) expenses.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1994878/fwd-senate-panel-approves-2025-proposed-budget-of-da>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Farmers in Bicol urged to harvest rice, corn ahead of Kristine

By: [Rey Anthony Ostria](#) - Correspondent / [@RAOstriaINQ](#)

[Inquirer Southern Luzon](#) / 05:24 PM October 21, 2024



The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Monday urged farmers to harvest their rice and corn crops as Tropical Depression Kristine approaches the Philippines.—  
GEORGE GIO BRONDIAL

LEGAZPI CITY — The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Monday urged farmers to harvest their rice and corn crops as Tropical Depression Kristine approaches the Philippines.

State meteorologists said Kristine was expected to intensify into a tropical storm by Tuesday, bringing heavy rains and possible flooding across the Bicol region.

The DA advised farmers to harvest rice once it is 85 percent ripe and corn when it reaches 85- to 90-percent maturity.

Farmers could use combine harvesters available at the DA regional office in Pili, Camarines Sur, as well as at research outreach stations in Daet, Camarines Norte, and Masbate City.

The DA also recommended drying harvested rice using flatbed dryers distributed to farmers' cooperatives, associations, and local government units in the region. INQ

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1994956/farmers-in-bicol-urged-to-harvest-rice-corn-ahead-of-kristine>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# P7 billion sought for Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund

By: [Dianne Sampang](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 04:29 PM October 21, 2024



(INQUIRER file photo / ERWIN MASCARIÑAS)

MANILA, Philippines — Senator Cynthia Villar on Monday said that she will ask the Department of Agriculture and the Senate mother committee for P7 billion to finance the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RECF) under the [proposed 2025 DA budget](#).

“I will ask the DA and the mother committee to give me [P]7 billion to finance the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund because they brought the tariff on rice from 35 percent to 15 percent,” Villar, chairperson of the Senate subcommittee on finance, said.

Republic Act No. 11203, or the Rice Tariffication Law, created the RCEF which seeks to improve the income and productivity of farmers and provide assistance through farm machinery, seed developments, credit, and extension service.



“Because of that we might only be able to collect [P]15 billion and we need [P]30 billion so there is an excess this year,” Villar added.

The senator also noted that P10 billion for RCEF and P8 billion of financial assistance to rice farmers owning two hectares of land and below will be spent this year.

“So there is a shortage of P7 billion so I want the DA to put that in the budget so we will have [P]30 billion next year for the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund,” Villar said.

Senate Bill No. 2779 and House Bill No. 10381 that seeks to amend the Agricultural Tariffication Act aim to increase to P30 billion under the new proposed RCEF fund. It also seeks to extend the validity of the program which will end in 2025.

The Senate subcommittee on finance approved on Monday the proposed 2025 budget of the DA.

The total budget to be presented to the plenary is P178.273 billion.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1994952/fwd-cynthia-villar-to-ask-for-p7-billion-to-fund-rcef-under-2025-proposed-budget>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# RCEF needs P7B from budget after rice tariff reduction — Villar

October 21, 2024 | 8:55 pm



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

SENATOR Cynthia A. Villar said P7 billion needs to be added to the Department of Agriculture’s (DA) proposed budget next year in order to fund the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

She said RCEF will require P30 billion next year, but as it is supported mainly by tariffs on imported rice, a shortfall is looming after the reduction in tariff rates to 15% from 35%.

At a Senate finance committee hearing looking into the DA’s proposed P178.27 billion next year, Ms. Villar said the government is expected to collect P15 billion in rice import tariffs in 2025.

She said RCEF under current rules needs to disburse P10 billion, while a program providing financial assistance to farmers who own farmland measuring 2 hectares and below will take up P8 billion.

Citing the goal of providing P30 billion to RCEF, she said: “I want the DA to put (a further P7 billion) into the budget.”

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

Congress has passed a measure seeking to raise the yearly allocation of the RCEF to P30 billion from P10 billion until 2031. The President has yet to sign it into law.

The measure amends the Rice Tariffication Law of 2019 or Republic Act No. 11203. RA 11203 opened up to private entities the rice import trade, which had previously been dominated by the National Food Authority (NFA), which imported the grain via government-to-government deals.

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

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

Meanwhile, Ms. Villar said she backed a P50-million budget to establish a rubber institute next year, subject to negotiations at the plenary, and additional funding for the Bureau of Animal Industry by setting up a livestock, poultry and dairy competitiveness fund.

The Senate in August approved on final reading a bill seeking to develop a modernization plan for the livestock, poultry and dairy industries. — **John Victor D. Ordoñez**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/10/21/629668/rcef-needs-p7b-from-budget-after-rice-tariff-reduction-villar/>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

## *Rice imports to surpass 2023 level*

By Janine Alexis Miguel  
October 22, 2024

THE Philippines has been importing rice at such a high volume that will most likely exceed that of the whole of 2023.

Data from the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Plant Industry (DA-BPI) showed rice shipments as of October 17 totaled 3.58 million metric tons (MT), close to surpassing the 3.61 million MT total last year.

The figures are even higher than the 2.84 million MT record from January to October 2023.

In contrast, the 3.6 million MT imports in 2023 were 5.9 percent lower than the 3.82 million MT in 2022.

From October 1 to 17, 2024, rice shipments reached 294,113 MT, while those of July totaled 398,113 MT. Average monthly rice imports since August were over 300,000 MT.

Furthermore, 925,013 MT of rice arrived in the last quarter of 2023, with the bulk at 510,901 MT shipped in December.

"Any additional buffer rice stocks to prepare for the risk of La Niña later in 2024 would also lead to increased rice imports," Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC) chief economist Michael Ricafort said, adding that the lower tariff rates on imported rice, as well as reduced world rice prices — which are at their lowest in the past two-and-a-half months — could likewise reduce local rice prices.

Vietnam remained the top rice exporter to the Philippines during the period with over 2.84 million MT or 79 percent of total imports.

Next is Thailand with 448,963 MT; Pakistan, 159,159 MT; and Myanmar, 107,198 MT.

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

In its monthly report, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in Manila projected the Philippines' rice import volume to reach 4.7 million MT for 2024 — even as Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier said otherwise.

In any case, the Philippines still ranks as the world's top rice importer.

Vietnam follows with an estimated 2.9 million MT, and the European Union, 2.2 million MT.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/10/22/business/top-business/rice-imports-to-surpass-2023-level/1988409>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

## *Basilan folks exchange guns for agricultural tools, farm equipment*

October 22, 2024

RESIDENTS of Basilan are exchanging their unregistered firearms for agricultural tools and equipment in a bid to shy away from the old gun culture in the island province.

They received a wheel loader, three tractors with disc plow, at least 1,000 free-range chickens and various farm inputs, while residents in the town of Hadji Mohammad Ahjul were provided with solar-powered ice block machines, a mini delivery cargo van, a tractor with disc plow, 500 free-range chickens and various farm inputs.

These were turned over after residents turned in at least 771 firearms and stenciled 556 weapons through the Assistance for Security, Peace, Integration and Recovery for Advancing Human Security in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao or Aspire program was launched last year.

The Aspire is funded by the Japanese government and facilitated by the United Nations Development Program. This program is under the Joint Normalization Committee between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which aims to reduce the loose firearms in the Bangsamoro Region.

Sumisip Mayor Jul-adnan Hataman said his town and the entire island province of Basilan are gradually stripping their old image as a hotbed of lawlessness to a province that is resilient.

Mayor Talib Pawaki of Hadji Mohammad Ahjul said he does not have enough words to thank the government agencies and international organizations for assisting his town with a positive transformation.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/10/22/tmt-newswire/basilan-folks-exchange-guns-for-agricultural-tools-farm-equipment/1988231>



**THE MANILA TIMES:**

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Furthermore, 925,013 MT of rice arrived in the last quarter of 2023, with the bulk at 510,901 MT shipped in December.

"Any additional buffer rice stocks to prepare for the risk of La Niña later in 2024 would also lead to increased rice imports," Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC) chief economist Michael Ricafort said, adding that the lower tariff rates on imported rice, as well as reduced world rice prices — which are at their lowest in the past two-and-a-half months — could likewise reduce local rice prices.

Vietnam remained the top rice exporter to the Philippines during the period with over 2.84 million MT or 79 percent of total imports.

Next is Thailand with 448,963 MT; Pakistan, 159,159 MT; and Myanmar, 107,198 MT.

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

In its monthly report, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in Manila projected the Philippines' rice import volume to reach 4.7 million MT for 2024 — even as Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier said otherwise.

In any case, the Philippines still ranks as the world's top rice importer.

Vietnam follows with an estimated 2.9 million MT, and the European Union, 2.2 million MT.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/10/22/business/top-business/rice-imports-to-surpass-2023-level/1988409>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

## ***Boosting competition in rice trade to uplift 2.9M–study***

Cai U. Ordinario  
October 22, 2024

ENCOURAGING greater competition in the rice trade could lift at least 2.9 million Filipinos out of poverty, according to a new study by local economists.

In a chapter of the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) book on competition, economists Karl Robert Jandoc, Geoffrey Ducanes, and Irene Jo Arzadon said the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) raised concerns about rice cartels among mill operators and wholesalers that lead to anticompetitive outcomes.

The removal of rice cartels could greatly increase the purchasing power of Filipinos as greater competition leads to cheaper prices. This increase in purchasing power could lead to lower poverty incidence and a narrower income inequality nationwide.

“Halving the market share of the collusive group from 30 percent to 15 percent will result in about a 2.7-percentage point decrease in poverty incidence, or about 2.9 million people lifted out of poverty,” the economists said.

“The same drop in market share will also decrease the Gini index by about 1 point which emphasizes that there will also be significant distributional gains of improving efficiency through competition in the short to medium run,” they added.

The impact could be greater if there is a competitive rice market in place and collusive or uncompetitive practices are eradicated, 5.13 million Filipinos could be lifted from poverty. This means there was a 4.85 percentage-point decrease in the poverty headcount.

It may be noted that this is based on a baseline of 16.71 million poor Filipinos and a gini coefficient of 42.27. The gini coefficient is a measure of inequality where zero means perfect equality and 100 means perfect inequality.

“[The data] shows that moving from a concentrated to a more competitive rice market—with the corresponding price decrease derived from this change—reduces the poverty incidence by 4.85 percentage points and the Gini index by 1.96 points,” the economists said.

These were based on their simulations using the Welfare and Competition (WELCOM) approach that can “examine how changes in market concentration affect distribution.”

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said this highlights the importance of a well-crafted competition policy. Balisacan said competition paves the way for creating greater economic opportunities, unlocking innovation, and sustaining economic growth.

Balisacan, who is one of the editors of the ADBI book “Designing Competition Policy for Economic Development in Asia and the Pacific,” said competition policy plays a key role of in the Asia and the Pacific.

He said in a recent speech in Tokyo that a sound competition policy can contribute to broader development objectives by boosting productivity and creating a culture of innovation among market incumbents, ultimately benefiting end-consumers.

“Competition policy for economic development entails the application of disruptive competitive pressure on rent-rich incumbents to break their grip on captive markets and thereby enable greater consumer choice. This results in more affordable prices, higher product quality, faster adoption of new processes, and the creation of new products as market actors are forced to sink or swim,” the Philippine government’s chief economic planner added.

“From a political economy perspective, a credible competition authority wielding its various enforcement and advocacy tools can function as a countervailing force acting on behalf of consumers, tipping the balance of market power and improving overall economic welfare,” said Balisacan.

Balisacan cited the Philippine case wherein competition policy was integrated into the Philippine Development Plan 2023 to 2028, complementing other policy tools that aim to achieve various development objectives across a range of sectors and industries. Still, the Neda chief mentioned that mainstreaming has come with its implementation and coordination challenges.

Meanwhile, Development Academy of the Philippines President and Chief Executive Officer Majah-Leah V. Ravago who provided an overview of the book as co-editor, highlighted and summarized the book's key sections on the evolution, objectives, and key pillars of competition policy as well as emerging issues and current implementation challenges.

Ravago concluded by saying that competition law in Asia needs to be adapted to align with local development priorities and with consideration for its complementarity with industrial policy. She was joined by her co-editor, Professor James Roumasset of the University of Hawaii via recording.

Balisacan was the founding chairmann of the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC), which was established in 2016. The PCC is mandated to promote healthy market competition and economic efficiency, as well as curb anti-competitive behavior to protect consumers.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/10/22/boosting-competition-in-rice-trade-to-uplift-2-9m-study/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

## *Rice arrivals hit 3.59 MMT as shipments pick up in 3rd quarter*

Ada Pelonia  
October 22, 2024

THE country's rice arrivals reached 3.5 million metric tons (MMT) as shipments picked up in the third quarter of the year.

Data from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) showed that rice arrivals from January 1 to October 17 reached 3.59 MMT. The country's actual shipments was 3.61 MMT last year.

The shipments began to pick up after slowing in July to 167,407.26 metric tons (MT) following the issuance of Executive Order (EO) 62, which lowered the tariffs to 15 percent, and which took effect in the same month.

Rice shipments in August and September rose to nearly 400,000 metric tons (MT), which was the average arrival from the first semester, based on BPI data. As of mid-October, rice arrivals already reached 294,113.58 MT.

Of the volume that arrived in the Philippines, BPI data showed that over 2.84 MMT came from Vietnam, which maintained its status as the country's top source of imports. Thailand was the second-largest supplier, accounting for 448,963.28 MT.

The Philippines also purchased rice from other countries such as Pakistan (159,159.48 MT), Myanmar (107,198.75 MT) and India (22,039.04 MT).

India, the world's largest exporter, recently lifted its ban on non-basmati white rice shipments and set a minimum export price (MEP) of \$490 per MT.

Government official and industry sources said India easing its export restrictions could affect world and domestic rice prices.

It could also open the country to an alternative source of imported rice, considering its lower quotation on the commodity in contrast with other exporting countries.

“Considering that it is cheaper compared to Vietnam and Thailand, it can be an option for additional rice supply and import diversification,” University of Asia and the Pacific’s Center for Food and Agribusiness (CFA) Executive Director Marie Annette Galvez-Dacul said.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently adjusted upward its estimate of the Philippines’s rice imports in 2025 owing to a smaller crop.

In its latest report, the USDA said the country’s rice imports next year could reach 4.9 million metric tons (MMT), higher than its previous forecast of 4.6 MMT.

“Global imports are forecast higher with increases to several African and Asian markets following India’s trade policy changes likely creating more available global supplies and lower prices,” the USDA report read.

The USDA also increased the projection of the Philippines’s rice imports this year to 4.7 MMT due to “strong buying of Vietnam rice.”

Based on BPI data, the agency approved and issued 8,124 sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs) for the purchase of 8 MMT of imported rice.

Rice importers are required to secure an SPSIC from the BPI before bringing in foreign rice stocks to certify that these are safe for human and animal consumption.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/10/22/rice-arrivals-hit-3-59-mmt-as-shipments-pick-up-in-3rd-quarter/>



**REMATE:**

## **Villar humiling ng P7B pondo para sa RCEF**

October 21, 2024 16:05



**Humiling ng P7 bilyong alokasyon si Senador Cynthia Villar sa Department of Agriculture (DA) para pondohan ang Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) kasabay ng pagdinig nitong Lunes, Oktubre 21 ng Finance Subcommittee B para sa proposed 2025 budget ng DA. CESAR MORALES**



<https://remate.ph/villar-humiling-ng-p7b-pondo-para-sa-rcef/>