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MANILA BULLETIN:

Sustainable agricultural development: Moving beyond quick fixes

BY [MANILA BULLETIN](#)

Nov 11, 2024 00:07 AM



What is the significance of being the number one rice importer in the world?

The Philippines' rice industry has long been at the center of debates concerning food security, agricultural development, and economic sustainability. As observed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) over the weekend, the country is poised to maintain its standing as the world's number one rice importer, which may be viewed as both a necessity and a challenge. While proponents point to its immediate benefits, critics warn of the negative impact on local rice farmers. To strike a balance, it is imperative to not only understand the short-term benefits but also address the systemic gaps and long-term strategic solutions required to achieve both food security and sustainable agricultural growth.

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Large-scale rice importation has a stabilizing effect on local rice prices. With the Philippines being vulnerable to rice shortages due to extreme weather conditions and other disruptions, imports provide a buffer that ensures adequate supply during lean months, especially during the harvest off-season. This helps keep rice prices affordable for millions of Filipinos who rely on this staple as a daily food source. Importing rice also alleviates the pressure on local markets, preventing price hikes that could lead to food insecurity.

Additionally, rice imports can help mitigate the rising costs of domestic production. With increasing fuel prices, labor shortages, and rising input costs like fertilizers and seeds, Filipino farmers often struggle to compete with cheaper imported rice. By keeping rice affordable through

imports, the government can ease the economic burden on consumers, particularly those in lower income brackets.

On the downside, the influx of cheaper, subsidized rice from abroad has resulted in a price imbalance, making it difficult for local farmers to compete. Many are left with little choice but to sell their harvests at a loss or abandon rice farming altogether.

Despite strenuous efforts of the Department of Agriculture to support local farmers through subsidies, quality seed supply, modern farming technology, and irrigation systems, their productivity and efficiency remain low compared to farmers in other rice-producing countries.

Clearly, the government must take proactive steps to reform the agricultural sector, focusing on improving both the supply chain and the overall efficiency of rice production. Infrastructure development is key. Upgrading the nation's irrigation systems, building more modern rice mills, and investing in better roads and transport logistics can significantly reduce post-harvest losses and improve market access for local farmers. Secondly, enhancing research and development for more resilient and higher-yielding rice varieties is essential to help Filipino farmers become more competitive.

Another critical area that requires attention is the market and pricing system. While rice importation has served as a stabilizer, there needs to be a more transparent system to ensure that both local farmers and consumers benefit. On this score, there is a need to level up in the optimum utilization of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) to support farmers with training, subsidies, and technology, allowing them to compete with imported rice without relying solely on government imports.

In the long term, the optimal strategy for the Philippines must focus on sustainable agricultural development. This involves moving beyond temporary fixes like large-scale rice imports and instead fostering an environment where Filipino rice farmers can thrive. The government should prioritize agriculture as a key sector for economic growth, investing in rural areas, and supporting innovations that make farming more profitable and sustainable.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/11/11/sustainable-agricultural-development-moving-beyond-quick-fixes>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA chief: No sugar imports until mid-2025

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

November 11, 2024 | 12:00am



The decision was reached during his recent meeting with Sugar Regulatory Authority (SRA) Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona.

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MANILA, Philippines — There will be no importation of sugar until mid-2025 as the domestic supply of both raw and refined sugar remains stable and sufficient to meet projected needs, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel Jr. said.

The decision was reached during his recent meeting with Sugar Regulatory Authority (SRA) Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona.

“Administrator Azcona and I agreed that a decision on sugar importation could be delayed until after May, when the current harvest season ends,” Tiu Laurel said.

He added that they will have to first gain a clearer understanding of the country’s domestic supply with the start of the current crop year’s harvest.

Azcona said the current harvest season started slowly, with total cane volume reaching only a third of the amount harvested around the same period in the last crop year.

He blamed the lower sugar content of cane to El Niño as the prolonged dry spells resulted in the cane being physiologically immature.

This then resulted in a 16 percent lower sugar content per ton of cane which affected sugar output despite an increase in planting areas.

“Farmers had to delay their harvests to allow the cane to mature further and increase sugar content,” he said.

Based on SRA data, the area planted to sugar cane this year increased slightly to 389,461 hectares, up from 388,378 hectares the previous crop year.

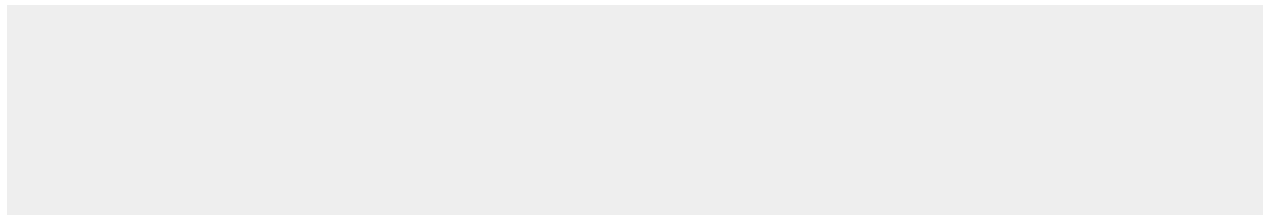
Azcona said that this year’s sugar production is expected to reach 1.782 million metric tons (MT) while the US Department of Agriculture forecasts a 3.6-percent decline in Philippine raw sugar production for the current crop year.

He said the sugar output is expected to fall to 1.85 million MT from 1.92 million MT in the previous crop year.

The current crop year ends in August next year.

Based on monitoring of the DA, the retail price of refined sugar ranged between P74 and P90 per kilo; washed sugar, between P70 and P90; and brown sugar, between P65 and P90 per kilo. — **Gilbert Bayoran**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/11/11/2399238/da-chief-no-sugar-imports-until-mid-2025>



THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

President Marcos delivers aid to Marce-hit Cagayan, Ilocos

[Helen Flores](#) - The Philippine Star

November 11, 2024 | 12:00am



President Marcos leads the distribution of government aid to families affected by Typhoon Marce at the Pagudpud Cultural and Sports Complex in Ilocos Norte yesterday.

Noel Pabaleta

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos brought various forms of assistance to areas hit by Typhoon Marce in Cagayan and his home province of Ilocos Norte yesterday, assuring the provinces of continuous support from the national government for their recovery needs.

In the morning, the President was accompanied by his sons Simon and Vincent and several Cabinet secretaries in Buguey, Cagayan in the distribution of aid.

“Expect that as long as there is a need – what we do is, we do not say after one week, we will leave; after five days, we are leaving. As long as you need us here, we will stay here,” the President said in a speech at the Doña Isabel Gymnasium in Buguey.

Also joining the President were Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian, Education Secretary Sonny Angara, Public Works Secretary Manuel Bonoan, Communications Technology Secretary Ivan John Uy, Special Assistant to the President Anton Lagdameo and Katrina Ponce Enrile, administrator and chief executive officer of the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority.

Marcos ordered the immediate repair of school buildings and other infrastructure, and vowed to support the seafood industry in the province.

Buguey is considered the crab capital of North Luzon.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), meanwhile, distributed 1,800 food packs, while the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and the National Irrigation Administration turned over 200 packs of 5-kilogram rice and 20 boxes of sardines and 1,000 packs of 10 kg rice, respectively.

The Department of Agriculture also handed over P866.3 million in various interventions to farmers composed of hybrid rice seeds, fertilizer discount, vegetable seeds, native chickens and ducks.

Marcos handed over P10 million each to the local executives of Aparri, Buguey, Sanchez-Mira, Santa Teresita, Baggao, Gattaran, Gonzaga and Santa Ana.

Marce made landfall over Santa Ana, Cagayan on Nov. 7, uprooting trees and ripping off parts of houses.

“The very good news that we have with the passage of Marce, in the entire Philippines we did not record any death, we have no casualty. It happened because people were evacuated quickly and early,” Marcos said in Filipino.

According to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), Marce affected a total of 15,518 families in Cagayan, with 6,395 of them staying in evacuation centers.

In the afternoon, the President inspected a seawall and a school damaged by Marce in Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte and led the distribution of aid at the Pagudpud Cultural and Sports Complex.

The President turned over P50 million in financial assistance from the Office of the President to Ilocos Norte Vice Gov. Cecillia Araneta-Marcos.

Marcos was also joined by his eldest son, Ilocos Norte First District Rep. Sandro Marcos.

The NDRRMC said 9,340 persons, or 2,903 families, were affected by Marce in Ilocos Norte. A total of 540 families or 1,635 persons are in evacuation centers.

Marce was the third tropical cyclone to hit the country in less than a month after Severe Tropical Storm Kristine and Super Typhoon Leon which left a combined 158 people dead, the NDRRMC said, with most of the that tally attributed to Kristine.

Meanwhile, First Lady Liza Marcos, accompanied by DSWD personnel, provided assistance to the victims of Kristine in Talisay, Batangas yesterday.

The DSWD, along with the Libreng Laboratoryo, Konsulta, at Gamot Para sa Lahat or LAB for ALL program of the First Lady, and DigiPlus Interactive provided food and non-food items to the families of the 61 people who died from the landslide and massive flood caused by Kristine in Batangas.

NFA rice stocks good for 7 days

National Food Authority Administrator Larry Lacson said over the weekend that NFA rice stocks are good for seven days, as the agency was able to procure at least 4.8 million bags or at least 237,885 metric tons (MT) despite the devastation of successive typhoons in the country.

In a radio interview, Lacson said that the NFA targets to increase the rice stocks to nine days or 6.1 million bags of palay or 300,000 MT of rice.

“We can boast at the NFA that our buffer stocks are very stable for the first time in a decade. We have many stocks because of the programs we have implemented. Nationwide, our stocks are more than seven days to last. The entire Philippines can eat. When we assumed, our stocks were only good for one day, but now it is seven days and it is still increasing,” he said.

The national daily consumption rate is equivalent to 679,670 bags or 33,983.5 MT, according to the NFA. — **Artemio Dumlao, Bella Cariaso**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/11/11/2399242/president-marcos-delivers-aid-marce-hit-cagayan-ilocos>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Philippines defers additional sugar import plans until mid-2025

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

November 11, 2024 | 12:00am



The government officials noted that waiting for the conclusion of the current harvest season would provide regulators a “clearer” understanding of the country’s domestic supply position.

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MANILA, Philippines — The government deferred any sugar importation plans until the middle of next year or until after the harvest season to protect domestic producers as nationwide stocks of the commodity remain ample to prevent any retail price spikes.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) announced that Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and Sugar Regulatory Authority (SRA) Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona reached the decision in a recent meeting.

The government officials noted that waiting for the conclusion of the current harvest season would provide regulators a “clearer” understanding of the country’s domestic supply position.

Tiu Laurel pointed out that there is no immediate need for additional sugar imports as current domestic stocks for both raw and refined sugar remain enough to meet the country’s projected requirement.

“Given the current situation, Administrator Azcona and I agreed that a decision on sugar importation could be delayed until after May, when the current harvest season ends,” he said.

Azcona explained that local raw sugar production has yet to peak with harvest in the current crop year being delayed by sugarcane planters to allow the canes to “mature further and increase sugar content.”

Raw sugar output as of Oct. 13 has plunged by nearly 80 percent year-on-year to 43,941 metric tons from last year’s 217,815 MT, based on SRA data.

The SRA attributed the decline in output to fewer cane volume worsened by lower sugar yield per cane as a result of the ill effects of the prolonged dry spell due to El Niño.

Sugar yield is down by 18 percent year-on-year to 1.42 50-kilogram bags per one metric ton of sugarcane.

Meanwhile, total sugarcanes milled to-date nosedived by 72.7 percent to 717,570 MT from 2.63 million MT.

The SRA earlier estimated that sugar production in crop year 2024-2025 would drop by 7.2 percent on an annual basis to 1.782 million MT, the lowest level in 25 years, because of the adverse effects of extreme weather conditions.

The current crop year ends in August next year.

The STAR earlier broke the story that the government would not open the minimum access volume (MAV) for sugar next year, as the country has ample stocks and retail prices of the commodity remain stable, contrasting with the dire supply situation two years ago.

For the second straight year, the DA will not open a sugar MAV as authorities deem the current supply sufficient, especially with the ongoing importation program.

As of Oct. 13, about 126,408 MT out of the 240,000 MT approved import volume under Sugar Order 5 for the crop year 2023-2024 have arrived in the country, based on the latest SRA data.

The latest SRA reports also show that the average price of refined sugar in Metro Manila remains stable at P84.62 per kilo while raw sugar fetches P76.15 per kilo.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/11/11/2399113/philippines-defers-additional-sugar-import-plans-until-mid-2025>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Philippines to import 5 MMT rice

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

November 11, 2024 | 12:00am



The USDA, in its November report, hiked its full-year rice import forecast for the Philippines by six percent to five million MT from its 4.7-million MT estimate in the previous month.

Philstar.com / Jovannie Lambayan

MANILA, Philippines — Five million metric tons. Or five billion kilograms.

That is the total volume of rice that the Philippines may import this year, according to the latest projections of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The USDA, in its November report, hiked its full-year rice import forecast for the Philippines by six percent to five million MT from its 4.7-million MT estimate in the previous month.

The international agency attributed the increase to rising purchases of rice by the Philippines from Vietnam to meet its growing demand for the staple.

If the import forecast materializes, then it will be the first time in history that the Philippines will be importing such a volume of rice since the liberalization and deregulation of the country's domestic rice industry in 2019.

Furthermore, the USDA revised upward its 2025 rice import forecast for the Philippines to 5.1 million MT from 4.9 million MT.

Based on the USDA's projections, the Philippines could be the world's largest buyer of rice for three straight years from 2023 to 2025.

The Philippines' total rice demand requirement, which includes actual consumption and carry-over stocks, may hit 16.6 million MT this year, about three percent over last year's 16.1 million MT, according to USDA.

Domestic rice harvest, meanwhile, is projected to drop by 300,000 MT year-on-year to 12.325 million MT from 12.625 million MT a year ago.

Last week, Leocadio Sebastian, a former agriculture undersecretary, said the country might import a total of 4.2 million MT of rice this year to meet its staple requirement and ensure stable prices in the market.

Sebastian said the country has to end the year with a good level of rice stocks to ensure that prices would not spike at the start of next year.

He said the country already lost about 900,000 MT of palay production due to extreme weather conditions, excluding the recent impact of severe tropical storm Kristine.

"The total production this year will be much lower than the 20 million MT produced last year," he said.

"We will probably reach about 4.2 million MT by the end of the year. I think it could be more, depending again on the traders on how they will be reacting to the global market," he added.

The country's rice imports have hit nearly 3.8 million MT as of end-October, surpassing the 3.6-million MT imported volume for the entire 2023, based on government data.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) earlier estimated that the country would end the year with a carryover supply of 3.83 million MT, buoyed by imported stocks, enough to cover nationwide consumption for about 100 days.

The DA projected that domestic palay harvest would decline to 19.41 million MT from last year's 20.06 million MT.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/11/11/2399129/philippines-import-5-mmt-rice>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA addressing high chicken, egg prices

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

November 11, 2024 | 12:00am



“Agriculture is such a huge bureaucracy and department with so many commodities involved, but Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel will address this in due time,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Efforts are being done by the Department of Agriculture (DA) to address the high retail prices of chicken and eggs amid complaints from poultry raisers that the drop in farmgate prices does not reflect retail prices in the markets.

“Agriculture is such a huge bureaucracy and department with so many commodities involved, but Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel will address this in due time,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said.

United Broiler Raisers Association chairman emeritus Gregorio San Diego has said that the farmgate price of chicken has dropped to P80 per kilo, but the retail cost is as high as P220 per kilo amid low demand.

San Diego added that broilers are suffering losses of up to P50 per kilo as the production cost has reached between P105 and P110 per kilo.

Based on monitoring of the DA in Metro Manila markets, the retail price of whole chicken ranged between P150 and P220 per kilo.

San Diego also said that the farmgate price of eggs has decreased to 50 centavos per piece but the retail price remains high.

The retail price of medium-sized eggs ranged between P8 and P9 per piece.

Fish price control

Meanwhile, De Mesa said the DA would not implement price control on fish after the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas asked the department to control the spike in the retail cost of fish in various markets.

“We are not recommending price control. The 30,000 metric tons of imported fish has started to arrive amid the closed fishing season,” De Mesa said.

Based on monitoring of the DA, the retail price of round scad or galunggong ranged between P200 and P320 per kilo; tilapia, P110 and P180 per kilo, and milkfish, P150 and P220 per kilo.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/11/11/2399180/da-addressing-high-chicken-egg-prices>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Cultivating resilience in our food systems



BROADCAST - [Jing Castañeda](#) - Philstar.com

November 10, 2024 | 10:20am



For better urban food systems: The guests, delegates, and attendees of the Urban Food Systems Policy Forum held on Nov. 6, 2024, at the Park-Inn Radisson in Quezon City.

Our growing population needs innovations in our food system now more than ever. According to data from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), around 51 million Filipinos experience moderate or severe food insecurity, placing the country among the highest rates in Southeast Asia. That's nearly half of our population, who face real risks of undernourishment and hunger.

The Urban Food Systems Policy Forum held last Thursday in Quezon City brought together leaders, experts, and advocates to discuss these issues head-on. As the moderator of this forum, I had the chance to see up close an insightful and inspiring dialogue that underscored the importance of multi-sectoral partnerships, innovative

policies and out-of-the box solutions to secure a better future for our urban food systems.

The forum provided a space for government officials, private sector leaders, researchers and local advocates to explore actionable solutions and policy ideas to combat this crisis.

Urban food systems are at the heart of this challenge. Our cities consume the bulk of the food produced in the country, yet urban food policies are often overlooked as priorities in local governance. The Urban Food Systems Policy Forum, made possible through the collaboration of the QC LGU and CGIAR's Resilient Cities Initiative, aimed to address this gap by focusing on pathways to create a sustainable, inclusive and resilient food system.

"Through research, we aim to provide the evidence to guide actions by government and to guide food system actors in creating healthier, wealthier and greener urban food systems," CGIAR Resilient Cities Co-lead Silvia Alonso said in her welcome message.



Moderating the session on “How Can Food Systems Researchers, Development Specialists, and City Networks Help Cities Build More Resilient Food Systems?” (L-R: ICLEI Southeast Asia Secretariat Reg'l. Program Mgr., Mae Valdez-Irong; IIRR Advisor, Dr. Julian Gonsalves; RCI Senior Advisor, Dr. Gordon Prain;, QC Food Security Task Force Co-chairperson, Nonong Velasco and QC MDAD Asst. Head, Atty. Edmundo Bacatan.

The important role food vendors play

By offering insights and examples from current projects, including the Vendor Business School and various community gardening initiatives, the forum highlighted the untapped potential within our urban food ecosystems.

The Vendor Business School is an innovative project that serves as a vital component in strengthening local food systems. Through a pilot program launched in 2024, QC food vendors received training to improve their business practices and food safety knowledge. These efforts aim to equip vendors – who are often women and serve as primary providers for their families – with the skills and resources they need to sustain their businesses.

It's important that we recognize the role of these vendors as critical players in the food supply chain and highlight the importance of focusing on the “last mile” of food distribution, ensuring food safety, quality, and accessibility.

Local wet markets, which provide the produce for many Filipino households, play a much bigger role in food systems than you might think! From small karinderyas to our suki market stalls, they are an essential part of urban life and serve as hubs for accessible food.

However, food vendors frequently operate on the fringes of formal policy, often facing financial constraints and, at times, harassment. Ensuring that local governments value and protect these vendors is fundamental for a resilient food system.



Quezon City and CGIAR with other food security advocates -- Using a whole-of-society approach anchored in multi-sectoral partnerships and out-of-the box solutions in securing a better future for our urban food systems.

A fresh approach on food systems needed

Mayor Joy Belmonte, a vocal advocate for food security, emphasized the need for innovation and a departure from outdated approaches to food policy.

"We must unlearn old practices that reflect linear and one-dimensional approaches to food security and nutrition, especially in how we finance these programs alongside with other key dimensions such as climate change and social services," Belmonte said.

This is in line with what Resilient Cities Senior Advisor Dr. Gordon Prain shared, that evidence-based decision making for our food systems must be an inter-sectoral approach. Dr. Prain pointed out that "it has to be a collaborative effort involving researchers, the public sector, the food security task force, and the private sector."

QC's own Joy of Urban Farming (JOUF) program, which began in 2010, can be a case study in what is possible when local governments embrace such complexity. Through the JOUF, over 1,300 urban gardens and 25,000 urban farmers have been trained to cultivate climate-resilient crops. This effort has introduced crops like talinum, gabi, and malunggay – local nutritious plants known for their resilience to extreme weather conditions.



The Urban Food Systems Policy Forum also hosted a "mini-exhibit" or poster display featuring different urban food systems initiatives and innovations.

International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) Advisor Dr. Julian Gonsalves, emphasized the need for more sustained efforts like the JOUF.

"Urban agriculture is notorious in the fact that some efforts have not been sustained. We need to measure success by using sustainability as a yardstick to determine if that was a success. If you don't have a 3-year time frame, don't stop," said Dr. Gonsalvez.

Dr. Herminigilda Gabertan, an assistant director at the the Department of Agriculture (DA)-Bureau of Plant Industry and National Urban and Peri Urban Agriculture Program, shared the department's ongoing initiatives to establish more community gardens. "We partnered with the different cities, the urban and the peri-urban for the Halina't Magtanim ng Prutas at Gulay sa Barangay -- the HAPAG program -- which aims to have a community garden in every barangay. We partnered with our corporate and the private partners, we put up a techno-demo or showcase, even in the malls and other strategic areas."



(First row, L-R) - Dr. Silvia Alonso and Dr. Gordon Prain (Resilient Cities Initiative), Dr. Julian Gonsalves (International Institute of Rural Reconstruction), Mae Valdez-Irong (ICLEI Southeast Asia); (Second Row, L-R) - Dr. Herminigilda A. Gabertan (Dept. of Agriculture), Dr. Liz Ignowski (World Vegetable Center, Thailand), Joseph Manicad (Dept. of Agriculture), Nonong Velasco (Food Security Task Force, Quezon City Gov't.)

Join the call for collaboration

My husband, Nonong Velasco, also the Co-chairperson of QC's Food Security Task Force, voiced out the LGU's optimism that the "proactive and collaborative, research-based approaches that Quezon City and CGIAR have shared could become a model for others to follow."

"This partnership shows the power of data-driven policies in transforming food security, and I believe it can inspire cities worldwide to build sustainable, food-secure futures for their communities," he added.

LGUs are a critical link in the “food system transformation and climate action because 68% of the world’s population will reside in cities by 2050,” Mae Valdez-Irong of the ICLEI Southeast Asia Secretariat emphasized. “Cities define societies’ consumption and production patterns.”



Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte (center) and the QC Food Security Task Force Secretariat – trailblazing the path with innovative programs and raising the standard for a sustainable food system and lasting food security.

Moderating this forum renewed my optimism in the power of collaboration. This meeting of minds – government officials, researchers and experts, local leaders, and passionate advocates – is exactly what we need to push for meaningful, lasting change in our food systems.

The collaboration between QC and CGIAR is a promising start. It serves as a testament to what can be achieved when a city dedicates itself to the ambitious goal of food security for all. This forum marks an important step forward, a step that I hope will spark even greater efforts to secure sustainable and inclusive food systems, not only in QC but across the nation.

After all, we all share a responsibility to ensure that every Filipino has access to nutritious, affordable food. With a clear vision, committed leadership, and sustained collaboration across sectors, we can indeed cultivate a food-secure, resilient future for all.

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<https://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/health-and-family/2024/11/10/2399084/cultivating-resilience-our-food-systems>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Economy's weakest link

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 04:35 AM November 11, 2024

The Philippine economy grew at a slower-than-expected 5.2 percent in the third quarter, according to preliminary data released last week by the Philippine Statistics Authority. This was a sharp slowdown from the 6.4 percent expansion recorded in the previous quarter and the 5.9 percent in the same typhoon season period in 2023.

The main reason for the slowdown was that bad weather slashed agricultural output. The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector, which accounts for about a tenth of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), shrank by 2.8 percent in the July-September period, a reversal of the already dismal 0.9-percent growth in the same quarter a year ago. This reflected "the impacts of the El Niño phenomenon during the planting season and the effects of seven typhoons, in addition to the Habagat (monsoon), during the harvest season," according to Secretary Arsenio Balisacan of the National Economic and Development Authority.

It is true that these are events beyond the government's control. However, it cannot forever blame these natural calamities that come with precise regularity because there are literally hundreds of ways to at least mitigate their impact on agricultural production that the government and the private sector can do. In short, the country is not helpless against these causes of farm destruction.

Flood control management

The problems of the sector are well-known. Agricultural land is being lost to manufacturing, shopping malls and housing. Aging farmers who have remained poor despite toiling all their lives have been encouraging their children to find more lucrative work. Progress is too slow despite promises by past administrations to modernize it, as shown by the limited number of irrigation facilities, outdated planting and harvesting methods, and inadequate milling and storing facilities. And there is corruption in the sector, in almost every crop from rice and sugar to onions and vegetables.

The biggest issue since the 1970s has been irrigation, or more specifically the lack of it. Adequate irrigation facilities are extremely necessary to address the country's need for water in times of drought, or the seasonal El Niño dry spell. Integrated with flood control systems and catch basins, these structures can also address the excessive rain brought by La Niña that brings higher-than-normal rainfall. The government should go big in installing irrigation and water control systems that will preserve water for use during the summer months and trap water in the uplands during the typhoon season for later use.

President Marcos has already taken a step toward this, directing the Department of Public Works and Highways to integrate its flood control management programs with other sectors, the National Irrigation Authority in particular, for effective water management and conservation.

Resilient practices

Another major action plan that the government needs to pursue with more zeal is on disaster preparedness and climate adaptation. While it has established systems to alert farmers about impending disasters or extreme weather conditions, it needs to provide more support on what they should do. For instance, the government needs to make farmers adopt resilient practices such as crop rotation and intercropping. It can also make use of current artificial intelligence and robotics to increase production by assessing the periods when crops produce more, or determining the best time to plant so that the harvest will not be affected by bad weather.

There should also be massive investment in technology and innovation for farming and fisheries. Put money in agricultural research to develop high-yield and climate-resilient crop varieties, offer training programs on modern farming techniques and sustainable practices, encourage the youth to participate in agriculture through an information campaign to increase awareness on the benefits of farming, and showing them modern farming methods in other countries that have better yields and therefore more income for farmers.

Bad reputation

These activities will need capital, which the government lacks. The solution is to entice private and even foreign investments. One way is through the Public-Private Partnership route that can encourage collaboration between government agencies and private sector players to boost investment in agriculture. The Makati Business Club, for instance, has emphasized the importance of using farming methods that can withstand climate disruption and help ensure a stable food supply.

By addressing these areas, the agricultural sector can improve its productivity, enhance the livelihoods of farmers, and contribute positively to overall economic growth to finally shed its bad reputation as the weakest link in the economy.

Stop blaming the weather each time the agriculture sector posts a dismal production. There are available solutions, the only problem is that the government is not focusing on them with enough vigor and funding.

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/178239/economys-weakest-link>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Forecast: PH to hit record rice imports in '25

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:09 AM November 11, 2024



File photo

The Philippines may reach new record overseas rice purchases until next year as it tries to meet an increasing demand for this staple food from a growing population.

The US Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA-FAS) said the country's rice imports could reach 5 million metric tons (MT) this year, up by 6.4 percent from its previous estimate of 4.7 million MT.

Upward projection

The projection has been revised upward due to "high volumes of Vietnam rice import," the USDA-FAS said in its latest "Grain: World Markets and Trade" report.

If attained, this will breach the record-high imports of 3.83 million MT in 2022.

Staple

The foreign agency also changed its 2025 forecast to 5.1 million MT from the 4.9 million MT previously because of the “growing consumption as rice is an important staple.”

According to the report, the Philippines is importing “record amounts” as demand picks up alongside lower import duties.

“Thus far in 2024, the Philippines relied on Vietnam for more than 80 percent of imports,” it added.

The USDA-FAS said Vietnam, the country’s leading source of imported rice, managed to “meet the burgeoning demand” from various countries including the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia as it secured additional supplies from Cambodia.

“Expanded imports from neighboring Cambodia have allowed Vietnam to boost its exports to meet strong foreign demand,” it added.

A previous report from the USDA-FAS in Manila quoted industry contacts saying the reduced tariffs provided “an attractive incentive” for traders to bring imported rice into the country.

Tariff rates

Per Executive Order No. 62 signed by President Marcos in June this year, rice tariff rates would stay at a lower 15 percent, from the previous 35 percent, until 2028.

Based on data from the Bureau of Plant Industry, the volume of imported rice that entered the country as of Oct. 30 totaling 3.79 million MT had already surpassed 2023’s 3.6 million MT.

Vietnam supplied nearly 80 percent of the total with 2.98 million MT, followed by Thailand with 470,273.28 MT and Pakistan with 175,174.48 MT.

Former Agriculture Undersecretary Leocadio Sebastian said last week that rice imports might hit a new record of 4.2 million MT by the end of this year as estimated by the DA following substantial losses from typhoons.

Sebastian had said the country might purchase at least 400,000 MT in the last two months of 2024, depending on world market pricing.

<https://business.inquirer.net/489306/forecast-ph-to-hit-record-rice-imports-in-25>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Aid assured as Nika nears storm-weary north Luzon

By: [Frances Mangosing](#), [Gillian Villanueva](#), [Melvin Gascon](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:55 AM November 11, 2024



AS NIKA APPROACHES President Marcos on Sunday leads the distribution of various aid packages to families in Buguey town in Cagayan, among the provinces worst hit by Typhoon Marce (international name: Yinxing). —Presidential Communications Office

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos pledged on Sunday that the national government would ensure the sustained delivery of aid until people ravaged by Typhoon Marce (international name: Yinxing) in northern Luzon are able to recover from the devastation.

At the same time, evacuations and storm preparations are underway as forecasters projected that Severe Tropical Storm Nika (international name: Toraji) is expected to make landfall in Isabela or Aurora on Monday morning or afternoon.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said in its 5 p.m. advisory on Sunday that Nika is forecast to reach typhoon category and reach its peak intensity of around 130 kilometers per hour prior to landfall.

“The tropical cyclone will then traverse mainland northern Luzon and emerge over the West Philippine Sea [on Monday] evening. Afterward, Nika will continue moving west northwestward and exit the Philippine area of responsibility by Tuesday afternoon,” it added.

Tropical Cyclone Wind Signal No. 2 was raised over the northern portion of Aurora, Isabela, Quirino, the southern portion of mainland Cagayan, Nueva Vizcaya, the southern portion of Apayao, Abra, Kalinga, Mountain Province, Ifugao, Benguet, the northern portion of Nueva Ecija, the southern portion of Ilocos Sur, La Union and the northeastern portion of Pangasinan.

The rest of Cagayan including Babuyan Islands, Apayao, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan, Aurora, Tarlac, the northern and central portions of Zambales, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Bulacan, Metro Manila, Rizal, the eastern portion of Laguna, the eastern portion of Quezon including Polillo Islands, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, and the northeastern portion of Albay were placed under Signal No. 1.

The weather bureau is also tracking two potential tropical cyclones in the coming days, which will be named Ofel and Pepito. Both are expected to follow the same path as Nika.

Response measures

In a press briefing, Interior Secretary Jonvic Remulla said 2,500 barangays prone to flood and landslides in the regions of Ilocos, Cagayan, Central Luzon and Cordillera were notified to evacuate starting Sunday night.

“We have 16 hours to respond. We have 16 hours to evacuate. We are prepared on the ground as far as national agencies and first responders are concerned, but it’s a matter of cooperation of our population to evacuate,” Remulla said.

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr., who chairs the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), also met with key government officials at Camp Aguinaldo on Sunday to coordinate disaster response measures in anticipation of the new storm.

Assistant Secretary Bernardo Rafaelito Alejandro IV, deputy administrator for operations of the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), urged regional directors to activate local interagency coordination cells to ensure rapid communication with local authorities.

OCD Director Agnes Palacio said affected regions in Nika's projected path should have available data and resources for swift preparedness planning.

Nika also prompted authorities to evacuate 1,500 families or about 8,000 people from low-lying areas in Camarines Sur by Sunday afternoon, according to Rep. Luis Raymund Villafuerte.

On Saturday, his son Camarines Gov. Vincenzo Renato Luigi Villafuerte ordered mandatory evacuations and suspended classes in all levels at public and private schools in anticipation of Nika.

Marce assessment

In a speech in Buguey town in Cagayan, Marcos expressed relief that no casualties were reported after Marce hit large parts of Cagayan and Ilocos Norte provinces with gusts of up to 240 kph.

“If you still need anything, let us know. You have the regional and provincial offices of the different national agencies, [and] as much as possible, as long as we can, as long as we're able to do it—and even if it's beyond our ability, we'll find a way to make it happen because we can't simply leave people behind,” he vowed.

“And we won't stop until you can truly say that you can do it on your own and no longer need the help of the government,” the President added.

The President led members of his Cabinet and local officials in visiting ravaged communities in Cagayan and Ilocos Norte, which bore the brunt of Marce as it made landfall at the northern tip of the Luzon mainland on Saturday afternoon.

“The very good news that we have on the passage of Marce, is that nationwide, we do not have any casualty because of the prompt evacuation of residents,” he said.

He expressed delight that residents heeded officials’ warning about the dangers of the typhoon.

Financial assistance

He pledged to help in the recovery of Cagayan’s seafood industry, mainly through the Department of Agriculture (DA).

“Not so much with crops, but your fisheries sector bore much of the damage, and because you are considered the crab capital of the Philippines on which many rely for their livelihood, we have to do everything that we can to have [the industry] restored,” he told fisherfolk of Buguey, which celebrates its annual Crab Festival every October.

The President directed the Department of Education and Department of Public Works and Highways to undertake immediate repairs of damaged school buildings and other related infrastructure.

The Department of Labor and Employment, meanwhile, will provide emergency employment to displaced farmers and fisherfolk through the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (Tupad), he said.

According to official data from the NDRRMC, Marce affected a total of 15,518 families in Cagayan, 6,395 of whom were sheltered at evacuation centers.

More than 3,000 families were staying outside evacuation centers, the NDRRMC said.

From Cagayan, the President proceeded to his home province of Ilocos Norte, where he led the handing over of up to P70 million in livelihood and financial assistance to residents affected by Marce.

He also handed over P50 million in financial assistance from the Office of the President to Ilocos Norte Vice Gov. Cecilia Araneta-Marcos. —*with reports from Michael B. Jaucian, Ma. April Mier-Manjares and Delfin T. Mallari Jr.*

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2003321/aid-assured-as-nika-nears-storm-weary-north-luzon>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Sugar import plans frozen until mid-2025

November 11, 2024 | 12:04 am



BOC - PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE DIVISION (BOC-PIAD)

THE Department of Agriculture said that it will postpone sugar imports until the middle of 2025, noting that domestic supply is expected to be stable.

“Given the current situation... a decision on sugar imports can be delayed until after May, when the current harvest season ends,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said in a statement on Sunday.

He ruled out additional imports of refined sugar, saying stocks of raw and refined sugar remain adequate.

According to the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA), raw sugar stocks hit 216,641 metric tons (MT), while those of refined sugar amounted to 513,393 MT as of Oct. 13.

“We are just beginning our harvest season, so Secretary Laurel and I agree to delay the decision on sugar imports until after harvest sometime in May,” SRA Administrator Pablo Luis S. Azcona said.

The regulator had earlier allowed imports of 240,000 MT of refined sugar aimed at plugging supply gaps before the start of the current harvest.

He added that the current harvest started slowly, with total cane volume equivalent to a third of year-earlier volume.

“Farmers had to delay their harvests to allow the cane to mature further and increase sugar content,” Mr. Azcona said.

The SRA said prolonged dry spells due to El Niño caused the cane to be “physiologically immature,” resulting in a 16% lower sugar content per MT of sugarcane.

The US Department of Agriculture said Philippine raw sugar production is expected to decline 3.6% to 1.85 million metric tons (MMT) during the 2024-2025 crop year.

The SRA projects a 7.2% drop in sugar production from the 1.92 MMT reported during the previous crop year, citing crop damage sustained during the dry conditions brought about by El Niño.

The SRA said sugar production remained constrained by the weather phenomenon despite an increase in the land area planted to sugar to 389,461 hectares from 388,378 hectares in the previous crop year. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/11/11/633866/sugar-import-plans-frozen-until-mid-2025/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Food companies sell less healthy products in poor countries — report

November 11, 2024 | 12:03 am



REUTERS

LONDON — The world's biggest food and beverage companies on average sell products in low-income countries that are less healthy than what they sell in high-income countries, according to a new report.

Products sold by companies including Nestlé, Pepsico and Unilever were assessed as part of a global index published by the Access to Nutrition Initiative (ATNI), its first since 2021. The non-profit group found that across 30 companies, the products sold in low-income countries scored lower on a star rating system developed in Australia and New Zealand than those sold in high-income countries.

In the Health Star Rating system, products are ranked out of 5 on their healthiness, with 5 the best, and a score above 3.5 considered to be a healthier choice.

“In low-income countries, the multinationals’ portfolios rated 1.8 on the system. In high-income countries, where more products were tested, they were 2.3. — a very clear picture that what these companies are selling in the poorest countries in the world, where they are more and more active, are not healthy products,” said Mark Wijne, research director at ATNI, in an interview with Reuters.

“It’s a wake-up call for governments in these countries to be vigilant,” he added.

It is the first time the index has split the assessment into low and high-income countries.

ATNI said the index was important as packaged foods are increasingly playing a part in the obesity crisis that is now a global phenomenon.

More than one billion people worldwide are living with obesity, according to the World Health Organization. The World Bank estimates that 70% of people who are overweight or obese live in low- and middle-income countries.

“We have committed to grow our sales of more nutritious foods, as well as guiding people towards more balanced diets,” a Nestlé spokesperson said by e-mail, adding that Nestlé also fortifies products to help close nutrient gaps in developing countries.

A PepsiCo spokesperson declined to comment.

The company last year set new goals to lower sodium in its potato chips and add ingredients like whole grains into its foods. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/11/11/633865/food-companies-sell-less-healthy-products-in-poor-countries-report/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Famine imminent in Gaza, food security experts say

November 11, 2024 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

LONDON/UNITED NATIONS — There is a “strong likelihood that famine is imminent in areas” of the northern Gaza Strip, a committee of global food security experts warned, as Israel pursues a military offensive against Palestinian militant group Hamas in the area.

“Immediate action, within days not weeks, is required from all actors who are directly taking part in the conflict, or have influence on its conduct, to avert and alleviate this catastrophic situation,” the independent Famine Review Committee (FRC) said in a rare alert.

The warning comes just days ahead of a US deadline for Israel to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza or face potential restrictions on US military aid.

Israel’s mission to the United Nations in New York did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

“If no effective action is taken by stakeholders with influence, the scale of this looming catastrophe is likely to dwarf anything we have seen so far in the Gaza Strip since Oct. 7, 2023,” the FRC said.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that there are between 75,000 and 95,000 people still in northern Gaza.

The FRC said that it could be “assumed that starvation, malnutrition, and excess mortality due to malnutrition and disease, are rapidly increasing” in north Gaza.

“Famine thresholds may have already been crossed or else will be in the near future,” it said.

Israel began a wide military push in northern Gaza last month. The US has said it is watching to ensure that its ally’s actions on the ground show it does not have a “policy of starvation” in the north.

The FRC reviews findings by the global hunger monitor — an internationally recognized standard known as the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).

The IPC defines famine as when at least 20% of people in an area are suffering extreme food shortages, with at least 30% of children acutely malnourished and two people out of every 10,000 dying daily from starvation or malnutrition and disease.

The IPC is an initiative involving UN agencies, National Governments and aid groups that sets the global standard on measuring food crises.

The IPC warned last month that the entire Gaza Strip was at risk of famine, while top UN officials last week described the northern Gaza Strip as “apocalyptic” and everyone there was “at imminent risk of dying from disease, famine and violence.”

The amount of aid entering Gaza has plummeted to its lowest level in a year, according to UN data, and the UN has repeatedly accused Israel of hindering and blocking attempts to deliver aid, particularly to Gaza’s north.

Israel’s UN Ambassador Danny Danon last month told the Security Council that the issue in Gaza was not a lack of aid, saying more than a million tons had been delivered during the past year.

He accused Hamas of hijacking the assistance.

Hamas has repeatedly denied Israeli allegations that it was stealing aid and says Israel is to blame for shortages.

“The daily average number of trucks entering Gaza in late October was about 58 per day,” Jean-Martin Bauer, the UN World Food Programme’s director of food security and nutrition analysis, told Reuters on Friday.

“We were getting about 200 a day in September and August, so that’s really a big, big decline,” he said.
— **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/11/11/633864/famine-imminent-in-gaza-food-security-experts-say/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

UK confirms bird flu cases at commercial poultry farm

November 11, 2024 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

LONDON — The UK government said cases of bird flu had been confirmed in commercial poultry at premises in Yorkshire, after it increased the risk level of the disease from medium to high.

All poultry on the infected premises will be humanely culled, and a three-kilometer protection zone had been put in place surrounding the premises, it said in a statement.

Bird flu, or avian influenza, which has killed hundreds of millions of birds around the globe in recent years, has increasingly spread to mammals, raising concerns it may lead to human-to-human transmission.

Earlier in the day, the government raised its alert level after two different strains of the virus, H5N5 and H5N1, were detected in wild birds in the country over the autumn.

Britain, which had increased the threat level to medium in mid-October, has experienced several bird flu outbreaks over the years, including one in 2021 that was then described as the largest-ever in the country.
— Reuters

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/11/11/633863/uk-confirms-bird-flu-cases-at-commercial-poultry-farm/>

THE MANILA TIMES:

PH rice imports could hit new high

By **Janine Alexis Miguel**

November 11, 2024

RICE imports by the Philippines could hit another record high this year as domestic output remains unable to meet growing consumption.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has raised its projected import volume to 5.1 million metric tons from 4.9 million MT, noting that the country was "importing record amounts due to a combination of population growth and reduced import tariffs."

The government slashed the tariff on imported rice to 15 percent from 35 percent in July to drive down retail prices and help temper inflation.

Department of Agriculture (DA) data showed the Philippines had already shipped 3.8 million MT of the staple as of Oct. 30, surpassing the full-year 2023 total of 3.6 million MT and near 2022's record volume of 3.82 million MT.

Around 80 percent of the imports came from Vietnam, which is expected to post record rice exports of 8.9 million MT.

"The Philippines is expected to remain a primary destination for Vietnamese exports due to a combination of logistical advantages, competitive prices, and rising consumer demand for high-quality rice," the USDA said.

It noted that prices across Asian suppliers had gone down due to the pressure brought by India's market re-entry. The lifting of an export ban on non-basmati white rice and the removal of the minimum export price brought the current export quote to \$450 per ton.

Export quotes of Vietnam decreased by \$17 to \$517 per ton, while Thailand declined by \$19 to \$498/ton. Pakistani quotes also fell \$25 to \$462/ton, remaining the most competitive following India.

Last Wednesday, former DA undersecretary Leocadio Sebastian, now a member of the department's technical advisory group, said that Philippine rice imports could hit about 4.2 million MT.

"[T]hat means [this] November and December, we will probably be expecting another 400,000 metric tons minimum," he said while attributing the higher projected shipments to low domestic rice production due to typhoons and the El Niño weather pattern earlier this year.

"We will probably raise [the imports] to about 4.2 million metric tons by the end of the year," he added.

Total annual palay production, meanwhile, is expected to reach 19.41 million MT, equivalent to approximately 12.69 million MT of milled rice, excluding a forecast loss of around 358,000 MT.

The projected milled rice production is higher than the USDA's latest forecast of 12.3 million MT.

Rice consumption for this year is projected by the USDA to hit 17.2 million MT with an ending rice inventory of 3.7 million MT.

The DA has said that a combination of imports and proactive management of domestic production would help ensure stable rice supply for the Philippines.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/11/11/business/top-business/ph-rice-imports-could-hit-new-high/2001296>

THE MANILA TIMES:

DA: No sugar imports with supply still stable

By Janine Alexis Miguel

November 11, 2024

THE Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) will not import sugar until the second half of 2025 since supplies of raw and refined variants remain stable, the Department of Agriculture said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said there was no immediate need for additional sugar shipments because domestic supply for the current crop year was sufficient to meet projected needs. The decision was made following a meeting with SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona.

"Administrator Azcona and I agreed... sugar importation could be delayed until after May (2025) when the current harvest season ends," Tiu Laurel said. The current crop year ends in August next year.

El Niño weather, Azcona said, forced the current harvest season to start slowly, with total cane volume reaching only a third of the amount harvested in the same period in the last crop year.

"Farmers had to delay their harvests to allow the cane to mature further and increase sugar content," he explained.

"The prolonged dry spells brought by El Niño resulted in sugar cane being physiologically immature, resulting in a 16-percent lower sugar content per ton of cane," the DA confirmed.

This condition restricts sugar output despite an increase in planting areas. The area planted with sugar cane this year slightly widened to 389,461 hectares compared to 388,378 hectares the previous crop year, according to the SRA.

The SRA estimated this year's sugar production to reach 1.782 million metric tons (MT), 7.2 percent lower than the 1.92 million MT in the previous crop year.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Manila office, meanwhile, forecasts a 3.6-percent drop in Philippine raw sugar production for the current crop year, with output falling to 1.85 million MT.

Azcona previously said sugar imports are not based solely on one projection, noting the figures are just the initial estimate for the crop year's production. The SRA usually provides three projections on raw sugar output throughout the year.

Sugar Order 1

Total domestic raw sugar market withdrawal, meanwhile, is estimated at 2.20 million MT.

To address the shortfall in supply, the SRA issued Sugar Order 1, in which all sugar produced must be allocated solely for local consumption, with 100 percent of production designated as "B" or domestic market sugar.

The order, which took effect in September, was a response to expected production gaps due to the prolonged effects of El Niño.

Azcona said this sugar policy aimed to ensure the domestic sugar market remained stable and fair for producers and consumers.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/11/11/business/top-business/da-no-sugar-imports-with-supply-still-stable/2001293>

THE MANILA TIMES:

US farmers worried over Trump tariff moves

By [Agence France-Presse](#)
November 11, 2024

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's first White House term saw a bruising trade war with China that left a lingering impact on farmers — and many are bracing for further fallout as the President-elect threatens higher levies on Beijing.

Trump tariffs since 2018 hit some \$300 billion of Chinese imports, sparking retaliation that targeted key farm products like soybeans and caused such exports to fall.

US farmers relied on subsidies to get by at the time and say China has since reduced its reliance on American agriculture products.

Trump has suggested tariffs on all imports this time — with an especially high rate on China — making many farm owners jittery about a return to trade tensions.

But this comes even as Trump's Republican party saw wide support in rural areas during this year's election, with many farmers supporting him despite the financial hit in the trade war. The hope is for economic conditions to improve.

'No money'

"There was no money to pay the bills, no money to actually have a living out of the operation," said Ted Winter, whose farm in Minnesota grows corn and soybeans.

Retaliatory tariffs on the United States caused more than \$27 billion in US agricultural export losses from mid-2018 to late-2019, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) found.

China accounted for around 95 percent of value lost.

Soybeans in particular made up nearly 71 percent of total trade loss, with Brazil gaining most of the lost trade.

Michael Slattery, who grows crops like corn, soybeans and wheat in Wisconsin, added: "I view this second term with tremendous trepidation."

Between 2017 and 2018, for example, his soybean income fell by over \$25,000 — and government payouts to alleviate the pain made up for just over half the shortfall.

The USDA estimates agriculture and related industries contributed a 5.6 percent share of GDP in 2023, while direct on-farm employment made up 2.6 million jobs in recent years.

Lasting hit

"What is more frightening is the breakdown in commercial order that has taken decades to establish," Slattery said.

While US farm exports to China rebounded after Washington and Beijing reached a trade war truce in 2020, a year after the deal, American market share remained lower than levels seen before the retaliatory tariffs were enacted.

"The tariffs that were imposed upon China drove them to find other sources for their food needs," said Winter.

And without foreign buyers like China to absorb excess farm production, the market becomes oversaturated, in turn driving down prices and farmer incomes, said Slattery.

Federal payments may have been helpful to farmers during the trade war, but trade ramifications extended long beyond it, said Scott Gerlt, chief economist at the American Soybean Association (ASA).

'Prime targets'

Soybeans and corn will again be "prime targets for tariffs" in a potential trade dispute, according to a National Corn Growers Association and ASA report last month.

Both commodities account for about one-fourth of the country's agriculture export value.

The report cautioned that many tariffs China imposed on US farm products have been given a waiver but could be reinstated — triggering an average drop of 51.8 percent in US soybean exports from expected levels.

Similarly, corn exports to China would also slide.

Brazil and Argentina, meanwhile, are expected to gain global market share with higher exports.

If the United States were not a reliable trade partner, other nations would turn to other countries, said ASA's Gerlt.

"We saw some other buyers step in to some extent like Egypt did for a while, but there is no replacing the size of the Chinese market," he told Agence France-Presse.

Among tariff proposals Trump floated on the campaign trail, he warned that the United States should be careful with trade policy, especially when it comes to countries that are major buyers of US agriculture.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/11/11/business/foreign-business/us-farmers-worried-over-trump-tariff-moves/2001282>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

PHL delays sugar imports till may; DA rules out need

[Ada Pelonia](#)
[November 11, 2024](#)

THE Philippines has decided to delay the importation of sugar until May 2025 following the conclusion of the current crop year's harvest, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said there was no immediate need for additional imports since the domestic supply of raw and refined sugar was sufficient to meet projected needs.

“Given the current situation, Administrator Azcona and I agreed that a decision on sugar importation could be delayed until after May when the current harvest season ends,” Laurel said in a statement.

Sugar Regulatory Authority (SRA) Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona seconded this, noting that the harvest season for the crop only recently began.

“Our supply for both raw and refined sugar are stable and we are just beginning our harvest season, so [Secretary] Laurel and I agreed to delay the decision on sugar imports until after harvest sometime in May,” Azcona said.

The SRA chief said the current harvest season started slowly, with total cane volume reaching only a third of the amount harvested around the same period in the last crop year due to lower sugar content per metric ton (MT) of cane because of El Niño.

“Farmers had to delay their harvests to allow the cane to mature further and increase sugar content,” he said.

According to the DA, the prolonged dry spells brought by El Niño resulted in the cane being physiologically immature, which resulted in a 16-percent lower sugar content per MT of cane and constrained sugar output despite an increase in planting areas.

Citing SRA data, the agency said the area planted for sugar cane this year increased slightly to 389,461 hectares from 388,378 hectares the previous crop year.

The SRA earlier projected that this crop year's sugar output will drop by 7.2 percent to 1.78 million metric tons (MMT) from the previous year's 1.92 MMT. The current crop year kicked off on September 1 and will end in August next year. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/05/phl-raw-sugar-output-to-fall-by-7-29-sra/>)

“[The projection] is based on the effect of El Niño on standing crops—those that were planted from October 2023 to May this year,” Azcona said.

However, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) said sugar production is projected to reach 1.85 MMT on the back of improving weather conditions which would allow the expansion in harvest area.

“Improvement in weather conditions from the previous El Niño is expected to provide better production in MY [marketing year] 2025,” the USDA said in its latest report. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/10/07/report-phl-raw-sugar-production-will-improve/>)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/11/phl-delays-sugar-imports-till-may-da-rules-out-need/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Bill mandating DA to import rice eyed to help consumers

Jovee Marie N. dela Cruz
November 11, 2024

AS the market prices for imported rice continue to rise, a House of Representatives leader said on Sunday that the Department of Agriculture (DA) should be the only entity permitted to import rice from other countries, saying this would be accomplished by passing legislation.

House Deputy Majority Leader Rep. Erwin Tulfo together with ACT-CIS Representatives Edvic Yap, Jocelyn Tulfo, Benguet Rep. Eric Yap, and Quezon City Rep. Ralph Tulfo plans to file on Monday a bill granting the DA the authority to directly import rice and sell it in the local market.

“The President already lowered tariffs on imported rice for private traders, yet prices remain between P50 and P60 per kilo in the market,” Tulfo pointed out.

“Don’t tell me the tariff reduction is pointless. So where are the tariff savings going? Shouldn’t they benefit the people?” he added.

Tulfo hinted that it appears only importers are benefiting from the current situation, prompting him to say, “we need to act now.”

With this, Tulfo said a bill proposing to give the DA the powers needed to import rice that would be sold in the market will be filed.

In the proposed bill, at whatever price the DA purchased the imported rice from other countries, it should also be sold at the same price in the market in the Philippines.

“Since the DA currently cannot sell rice directly, we will include in the proposal that interested rice retailers may apply to become licensed Kadiwa outlets under the DA,” Tulfo explained.

“We thought prices would go down with the tariff cut, but it turns out the profit only goes to the importers,” Tulfo remarked.

Tulfo said that once the DA is authorized to import rice regularly, it will create competition for private traders, effectively pressuring them to lower market prices.

He added that their bill also proposed that during the harvesting season of rice, the DA should stop issuing import permits for rice in order to protect the locally manufactured rice and the interests of the local farmers.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/11/bill-mandating-da-to-import-rice-eyed-to-help-consumers/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

‘PHL may set new rice imports record in 2024’

Ada Pelonia
November 11, 2024

The Philippines’s rice imports this year could surpass the record-high purchases it made in 2022 as El Niño and the storms that struck the country destroyed standing crops and reduced domestic output in recent months.

In its latest report, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) adjusted upward its estimate of the Philippine’s rice imports for this year to 5 million metric tons (MMT) from the previous 4.7 MMT.

The report noted a surge in shipments from Vietnam as the country grappled with the impact of El Niño and storms.

“Global imports are up with higher imports for the Philippines,” the USDA report read.

According to the international agency, the Philippines is importing record amounts due to a combination of population growth and reduced import tariffs.

“Thus far in 2024, the Philippines relied on Vietnam for more than 80 percent of imports,” the USDA added. President Marcos Jr. earlier slashed rice tariffs to 15 percent from 35 percent until 2028 as part of the government’s effort to cut rice prices.

Data from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) showed that rice import arrivals as of October 30 reached 3.79 MMT.

Of the volume that arrived in the Philippines, BPI data showed that over 2.97 MMT came from Vietnam, which maintained its status as the country’s top source of imports. Meanwhile, the USDA also raised its rice imports forecast for the Philippines in 2025 to 5.1 MMT on higher consumption of the staple.

“Global imports are forecast up with increases to Bangladesh, Vietnam, and the Philippines,” the international agency said. The USDA also said that developments in the global grain market could affect prices across Asian suppliers, such as India’s recent lifting of its ban on non-basmati rice and scrapping the minimum export price (MEP).

‘Looking ahead, prices across Asian suppliers have been under pressure by India’s market re-entry. Given renewed competition from India, Vietnam is forecast to export less in 2025,’ the international agency said. It also forecasts a reduction in Indonesia’s rice imports from Vietnam as the government increased its domestic procurement, but noted that such would not be the case for the Philippines.

“The Philippines is expected to remain a primary destination for Vietnamese exports due to a combination of logistical advantages, competitive prices, and rising consumer demand for high-quality rice.”

Former Agriculture Undersecretary Leocadio Sebastian recently said the Philippines’s rice imports could exceed 4.2 MMT by yearend as bad weather widened the projected shortfall in domestic production. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/06/foreign-farms-will-plug-rice-supply-shortfall/>)

He said a minimum of 400,000 metric tons (MT) could enter the country in the last two months of 2024.

“It could be more depending again on how our traders will also be reacting to the global market.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/11/phl-may-set-new-rice-imports-record-in-2024/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Sustainable fishing practices to improve food supply—group

Bless Aubrey Ogerio
November 11, 2024

The Philippines must immediately adopt sustainable fishing practices given its heavy reliance on fish for food and livelihood, according to a nongovernment organization.

Oceana senior adviser Michael Hirshfield said the adoption of sustainable practices will secure the country's food supply and ensure economic stability.

“Why the Philippines? They catch a lot of fish, they eat a lot of fish, a lot of people are dependent on fish,” he said during Oceana's 10th anniversary event.

With its more than 7,600 islands and 36,000 kilometers of coastline, the Philippines is a biodiversity hotspot in the Coral Triangle, as it has more than 2,600 marine fish species.

It is also a key player in global aquaculture production, ranking among the top 10 countries, according to a report by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization.

Hirshfield outlined Oceana's strategy, which combines science, legal expertise, and community-driven approaches to create lasting change. “Our approach starts from science but it doesn't stop there. We need lawyers, communicators, and the people.”

A 2024 FAO report showed a 4.4 percent increase in global fisheries production in 2022, reaching 223.2 million metric tons.

Meanwhile, Jurgenne Primavera, chief mangrove scientific adviser at the Zoological Society of London, explained the importance of mangroves in coastal resilience and fish protection.

She said the Philippines currently maintains a 1:1 ratio of mangroves to fish ponds. However, a study she co-authored in 2018 found that there is a need to increase this ratio for better flood regulation and ecosystem protection.

“The best way to increase mangrove hectares back over the 4:1 is by pond reversion and not by seafront planting, which, by the way, is the economically incorrect practice of planting the wrong species, Bacao or Rhizophora, in the wrong place, the lower intertidal zone.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/11/sustainable-fishing-practices-to-improve-food-supply-group/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Global food prices hit 18-month high in Oct–FAO

BusinessMirror
November 11, 2024

The benchmark for world food commodity prices surged to its highest level in 18 months in October, led by a sharp increase in vegetable oil quotations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reported Friday.

The FAO Food Price Index, which tracks monthly changes in the international prices of a set of globally-traded food commodities, averaged 127.4 points in October, up 2 percent from September and 5.5 percent from its value a year ago.

“Nevertheless, the index remained 20.5 percent below its March 2022 peak.”

FAO said its vegetable oil price index spiked by 7.3 percent in October, hitting a two-year high as a result of rising quotations for palm, soy, sunflower and rapeseed oil, driven mainly by concerns about production.

The FAO Cereal Price Index increased by 0.9 percent in October, led by rising wheat and maize export prices. “Global wheat prices were affected by unfavorable weather conditions in major northern hemisphere exporters as well as the re-introduction of an unofficial price floor in the Russian Federation and rising tensions in the Black Sea region.”

Corn prices were also higher, driven in part by strong domestic demand and transport challenges in Brazil due to low river levels.

“By contrast, the FAO All Rice Price Index declined by 5.6 percent in October, reflecting lower indica rice quotations driven by expectations of heightened competition among exporters following India’s removal of export restrictions on non-broken rice.”

FAO said its sugar price index inched up by 2.6 percent amid persisting concerns over the 2024/25 production outlook in Brazil following extended dry weather conditions.

“Rising international crude oil prices also contributed to the increase in sugar quotations by shifting more sugarcane toward ethanol production, while the weakening of the Brazilian real against the United States dollar limited the increase.”

Meanwhile, the FAO Dairy Price Index rose by 1.9 percent in October, averaging 21.4 percent above its level the same time last year. The increase was primarily driven by higher international cheese and butter prices, while quotations for milk powders declined.

Bucking the general upward trend, the FAO Meat Price Index dropped by 0.3 percent from September, mainly due to lower pig meat prices resulting from increased slaughter rates in Western Europe amid weak domestic and international demand.

“World poultry prices fell slightly in October, while those of ovine meat remained stable. By contrast, bovine meat prices increased moderately, underpinned by stronger international purchases.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/11/global-food-prices-hit-18-month-high-in-oct-fao/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Ubra: Lower farmgate prices may dent poultry output

Ada Pelonia
November 11, 2024

The poultry subsector would be hard-pressed to maintain its strong performance until the end of the year due to the recent drop in farmgate prices, according to the United Broiler Raisers Association (Ubra).

Among all the subsectors, only the poultry subsector recorded growth in the July-to-September period, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Ubra Chairman Elias Jose Inciong attributed this to higher production. He said, however, that lower farmgate prices are discouraging poultry raisers from further increasing output.

“Farmgate prices in the third quarter have not collapsed. It is possible that the collapse of farmgate prices will happen in the fourth quarter,” Inciong told the BusinessMirror in an interview.

He noted that farmgate prices fell to as low as P50 per kilo in some areas, such as Central Luzon, which have been experiencing a supply glut. Other areas in Luzon registered farmgate prices ranging from P75 per kilo to P77 per kilo.

Inciong also said farmgate prices of poultry in the Visayas and Mindanao are now on the decline.

Based on PSA data, the poultry subsector was able to maintain its positive performance for the third consecutive quarter this year.

Agricultural production in terms of value shrank by 3.7 percent in the third quarter. The crop, livestock, and fisheries subsectors registered declines.

According to the Department of Agriculture, the retail prices of chicken in Metro Manila markets stood at P140 to P220 per kilo.

Last September, Inciong said the country would have enough supply of local chicken during the holidays. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/11/ubra-phl-will-have-enough-poultry-this-holiday-season/>)

“Based on projections and past experiences, (chicken) supply would be more than sufficient,” he told the BusinessMirror.

However, Inciong said the expected spike in demand for poultry meat during the holidays will have an impact on prices.

“The holidays may exert upward pressure depending on the supply of pork and fish; imports may exert downward pressure.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/11/ubra-lower-farmgate-prices-may-dent-poultry-output/>

ABANTE TONITE:

PBBM ibabangon seafood industry sa Cagayan

November 10, 2024

Ipinangako ni Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. na ibabangon ng gobyerno ang seafood industry sa Buguey, Cagayan na malubhang nasalanta ng Bagyong Marce.

Ito ang tiniyak ng Pangulo sa kanyang pagbisita sa bayan ng Buguey nitong Linggo, Nobyembre 10, kung saan nakita niya ang lawak ng pinsala sa mga lugar ng hanapbuhay ng mamamayan na nag-aalaga ng talangka.

Ang Buguey ang crab capital sa Luzon at hindi ito nakaligtas sa hagupit ng Bagyong Marce.

“Dahil crab capital kayo ng Pilipinas, maraming naghahanapbuhay diyan sa ganyang klaseng negosyo. So, we have to do everything that we can para i-restore kaagad `yan,” wika ng Pangulo.

Nangako si Pangulong Marcos na tutulong ang Department of Agriculture sa mga magsasaka at mangingisda sa sandaling makumpleto ang pagtatasa sa mga napinsala ng bagyo.

Kikilos din aniya ang Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) para pansamantalang magbigay ng trabaho sa mga nawalan ng hanapbuhay sa pamamagitan ng Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD).

Bukod sa Buguey ay nakita rin ni Pangulong Marcos ang iba pang mga bayan sa Cagayan na nasalanta ng bagyo nang magsagawa ito ng aerial inspection. (Aileen Taliping)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/11/10/pbbm-ibabangon-seafood-industry-sa-cagayan/>

“Dont tell me walang saysay ang pagbaba ng taripa. So saan napupunta ang savings sa taripa? Dapat sa mga tao di ba?,” tanong ng mambabatas.

Aniya, mukhang ang nakikinabang lang ay ‘yung mga importer, therefore kailangan nating kumilos na”.

Maghahain ng panukalang batas si Cong. Tulfo ngayong araw kasama sina Cong. Edvic Yap at Jocelyn Tulfo ng ACT-CIS Partylist, Benguet Rep. Eric Yap, at Quezon City Rep. Ralph Tulfo na bigyan ng kapangyarihan ang DA na mag-import ng bigas para ibenta sa mga palengke.

Ayon sa panukalang batas, kung magkano nakuha ng DA ang bigas sa ibang bansa, ay siya na rin ang magiging katumbas na presyo sa ating merkado.

“Dahil bawal magbenta ang DA ng bigas, isasama natin sa panukala na ang mga interesadong rice retailers ay maari ng mag-apply bilang licensed kadiwa outlets sa DA”, paliwanag ni Tulfo.

Nakasaad din sa naturang panukalang batas na kapag panahon ng anihan ng palay, itigil ng DA ang pagbibigay ng import permit ng bigas sa lahat para maprotektahan ang local manufactured rice at ang interes ng mga magsasaka.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/11/11/2399185/gobyerno-na-lang-dapat-mag-import-ng-bigas-tulfo>