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MANILA BULLETIN:

₱666.7 million set aside for farmers hit by Kristine—DA

BY JEL SANTOS

Nov 3, 2024 07:44 PM



The Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) will allocate ₱666.7 million to farmers impacted by Severe Tropical Storm Kristine, Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. announced on Sunday, Nov. 3.

The storm, which struck between Oct. 22 and 25, affected 86,066 farmers across 10 regions, with Central Luzon, the Bicol Region, and Mimaropa (Region 4B) bearing the brunt of the damage.

According to PCIC President JB Jovy Bernabe, rice, high-value crops, and fisheries sustained the most damage, prompting expected payouts of ₱413.6 million for rice, ₱167.9 million for high-value crops, and ₱27.7 million for fisheries.

“We have set aside an initial amount of P667 million for insurance payments to around 86,066 farmers,” Bernabe said.

Laurel ordered the PCIC to expedite claims processing, emphasizing the need for rapid assistance to help farmers recover.

“The pace of recovery for agriculture after a disaster like this will be determined by how quickly the government can provide inputs and financial assistance to farmers and fisherfolk,” he said.

The DA chief said he had directed all DA agencies to prepare for damage assessments and ensure immediate aid where necessary.

“That is why I have ordered all agencies of the Department of Agriculture, including attached corporations such as the NFA (National Food Authority) and PCIC, to conduct quick needs assessments so that help can be provided immediately,” said Laurel.

The agency said it is also bracing for potential impacts from Super Typhoon Leon, which, despite being forecasted to avoid landfall, poses a risk due to its gale-force winds and potential storm surges up to 12 meters high.

https://mb.com.ph/2024/11/3/666-7-million-for-farmers-hit-by-kristine#google_vignette

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Kristine agriculture damage increases to P5.75 billion

[Romina Cabrera](#) - The Philippine Star

November 3, 2024 | 12:00am



Residents cross a river in Laurel, Batangas yesterday, after a local bridge collapsed at the height of Severe Tropical Storm Kristine.

Noel Pabalate

MANILA, Philippines — The amount of damage to agriculture caused by Severe Tropical Storm Kristine has increased to P5.75 billion, according to the Department of Agriculture.

The DA said Kristine displaced up to 131,661 farmers and fisherfolk, and destroyed over 100,000 hectares of farmlands.

Of the damaged farmlands, 38,466 hectares have no chance of recovery, the DA said.

Among crops, rice incurred the most losses amounting to P4.25 billion or 516,438 tons.

Up to P847 million worth of high-value crops, including spices, legumes and fruits, were wasted due to Kristine.

Corn and cassava incurred P72.15 million and P38.89 million in losses, respectively.

The fishery sector incurred P446.22 million worth of damage.

The DA said it would provide P541.02 million worth of agricultural inputs to address the damage caused by Kristine.

Another P500 million was allocated for the survival and recovery loan program, which would lend farmers up to P25,000 payable in three years without interest.

60,367 families still in evacuation centers

Despite improving weather conditions, up to 60,367 families or 261,612 people displaced by Kristine and Super Typhoon Leon are still in evacuation centers.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said Kristine and Leon left trails of massive destruction, particularly in Bicol and Calabarzon as well as Batanes.

The NDRRMC said the combined effects of the two cyclones displaced up to 2.2 million families or 8.5 million people in 82 provinces.

The agency reduced Kristine's fatality count from 150 to 149, with 120 people injured and 30 others missing.

As of yesterday, no deaths, injuries or missing people due to Leon were reported.

The total cost of assistance provided to families affected by the typhoons has reached P1.12 billion, the NDRRMC said.

Of the figure, P587.8 million in assistance were given to victims of Kristine in Bicol.

Search for missing cargo ship continues

Meanwhile, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) is searching for a cargo vessel with 10 crewmembers on board that was reported missing at the height of Kristine.

The M/V Sta. Monica-A1, owned by the Synergy Sea Ventures Inc., left the port of Sta. Cruz in Taytay, Palawan on Oct. 22.

The vessel was reportedly headed to the nearby port of Casian when it lost contact with authorities on Oct. 27.

Fishermen from the town of Mamburao in Occidental Mindoro recovered 10 empty liquefied petroleum gas tanks on Oct. 28.

The tanks, believed part of the cargo of the Sta. Monica, were sold by the fishermen.

The PCG said it was able to trace the buyer of the tanks.

The following day, a resident of Barangay Marikit in the neighboring town of Paluan reported spotting two bodies and other objects floating in the sea. A fisherman said he also saw the floating objects.

On Oct. 30, another fisherman recovered a life jacket bearing the name of the ship as well as two unmarked life rings off the coast of Paluan.

The owner of the Sta. Monica sought the help of the PCG following the recovery and sightings of floating objects.

The PCG deployed its 251 Islander aircraft, which flew over the seas of Mamburao and El Nido.

It said it would continue the search until the vessel is found. — **Michael Punongbayan, Ghio Ong**

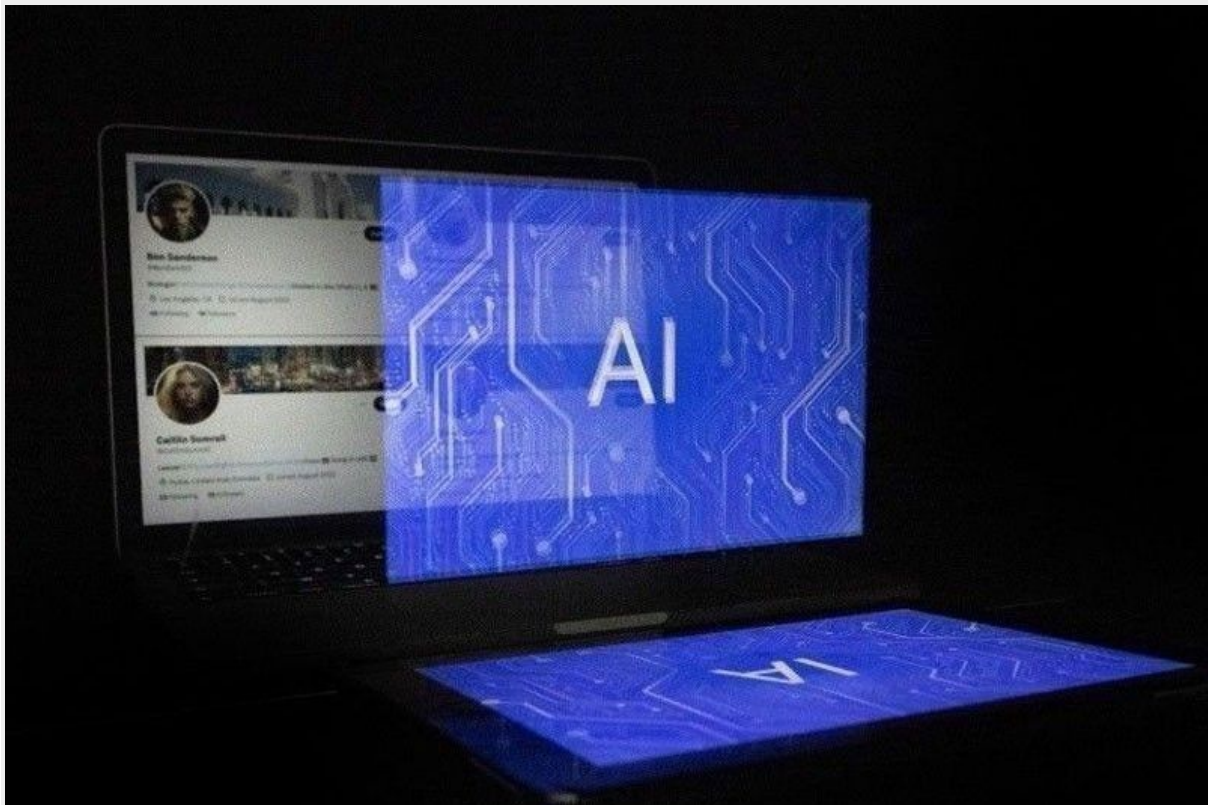
<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/11/03/2397276/kristine-agriculture-damage-increases-p575-billion>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

AI seen to improve food security, boost agriculture employment

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

November 3, 2024 | 12:00am



This illustration photograph taken in Helsinki on June 12, 2023, shows an AI (Artificial Intelligence) logo blended with four fake Twitter accounts bearing profile pictures apparently generated by Artificial Intelligence software.

Olivier MORIN / AFP

MANILA, Philippines — The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in agriculture and fisheries is expected to improve the country's food security and even entice the youth to venture in the sector, according to experts.

Various researchers on AI emphasized that the technology would ease various farming practices, resulting in more efficient processes that would lead to higher yield, lesser wastage and better farmers' welfare.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said that AI is necessary in digitalizing farm practices that would lead to sustainable agricultural production and better welfare for farmers.

“The urgency for digital transformation is underscored by the looming challenges such as food scarcity, economic fluctuations and supply chain disruptions,” said Honorio Flameño, the DA’s information and communication technology service director, during the first day of the University of the Philippines’ two-day conference on AI.

One of the key projects highlighted during the conference was Fish-I that could be used in assessing fish stocks in various water bodies in the country.

Fish-I addresses the “scant” availability of fish experts in the country and significantly reduces the risks that human divers face just to assess coral and fish stocks, said Laura David, director of the UP Marine Science Institute.

Fish stock assessment, David pointed out, is critical for the country’s food security as it would allow policy-makers and industry players to determine the availability of supply in a given body of water.

“It allows for the democratization of frequent monitoring of the fish sites. For example, local government units can do it on their own and just submit the data to us have our servers run through the data and give them the analysis in about two to three weeks time,” she said.

AI can also be used to accelerate the identification of specific strains of viruses and diseases such as avian influenza and African swine fever, leading to faster creation of much-needed vaccines to curb and prevent outbreaks.

Homer Pantua of UP Los Baños, for example, led a team that created an AI-driven system that monitors pig behavior and allows the detection of early signs of illnesses like ASF. Such a system reduces the need for manual observation and improves animal welfare.

“This technology allows us to act swiftly in detecting diseases, potentially saving millions in losses and improving overall farm productivity,” said Pros Naval, who co-leads the project.

Another research highlighted during the UP conference was the application of AI in detecting calamansi diseases, allowing farmers to have better management of their crop that could minimize their losses and improve earnings.

The AI model has an 87.2 percent accuracy, making it a good complement to farm management work as it cuts down on labor-intensive task of manually checking each calamansi tree.

“Our model gives farmers an advanced tool to detect diseases early, significantly improving crop management and productivity,” researcher Madecheen Pangaliman said.

The researchers also noted that AI could be helpful in enticing the youth to venture into agriculture and fisheries due to modern technological farming and fishing practices.

For example, fish experts welcomed the creation of Fish-I instead of being worried that they would be replaced by the AI-driven technology, David said. With the presence of Fish-I, fish experts would now have more time to analyze data and generate more in-depth insights, she added.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/11/03/2397146/ai-seen-improve-food-security-boost-agriculture-employment>

BUSINESS WORLD:

BoC estimates foregone revenue due to rice tariff cut at P16 billion

November 3, 2024 | 8:22 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/KRIZ JOHN ROSALES

THE Bureau of Customs (BoC) said revenue foregone in the second half due to the reduced rice tariffs is estimated at P16.34 billion.

In an e-mail to *BusinessWorld*, Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Y. Rubio said rice tariff collections in the six months to December will fall 57.45% to P12.1 billion under the new 15% tariff on imports of the staple grain.

“The BoC was projected to collect P28.447 billion using the (original) 35% tariff rate. Applying a 15% tariff rate reduces BoC collections to P12.103 billion... resulting in a decrease of P16.344 billion,” Mr. Rubio said.

In a bid to tame rice prices, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. slashed the tariff on rice imports to 15% from 35% until 2028 via Executive Order (EO) No. 62, which took effect on July 7.

In July, collections generated by imported rice dropped 27.9% to P889.13 million.

Had the government retained the 35% import tariff on rice, the BoC would have collected P2.15 billion that month, it said.

Meanwhile, Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura Executive Director Jayson H. Cainglet said EO 62 has not succeeded in substantially lowering rice prices.

“As what we have pointed out from the outset, savings of importers from tariff reduction will not automatically translate to cheaper rice prices. Importers and traders are pocketing the savings from the tariff reduction,” he said via Viber.

At the end of October, the price of imported regular-milled rice rose 73 centavos month on month to P45.22 per kilogram, according to Agriculture department price monitors.

On the other hand, well-milled rice at the end of October fetched P48.93 per kilo, down 38 centavos from a month earlier.

Rice import tariffs are allocated to the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) under Republic Act No. 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL).

Under the law, P10 billion in tariff money is to be allocated to RCEF for six years to distribute machinery, seed, credit, and fertilizer to farmers. The RCEF expired in June, but the President is due to sign amendments to the law seeking to extend its term and expand its allocation.

The decline in rice tariffs would also mean fewer subsidies for rice farmers, who are anticipating the looming effects of the La Niña weather pattern on production, Mr. Cainglet said.

“We are yet to approach peak harvest, and there is concern that the farmgate price of palay will further drop. Worse, the rice industry has been receiving significantly less from the RCEF,” he said.

In a Viber message, Federation of Free Farmers National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said the foregone tariffs would mean farmers would receive less budgetary support under the Rice Farmer Financial Assistance Program (RFFA), one of the initiatives funded by excess tariff collections.

Under the RTL, if annual tariff revenues exceed P10 billion, extra revenues would be earmarked for the RFFA, the Expanded Crop Insurance Program on Rice, titling of agricultural rice lands, and the Crop Diversification Program.

At the end of September, BoC collections rose 4.59% to P690.7 billion, about 0.46% short of its P693.9-billion target for the nine-month period.

Customs aims to collect P939.7 billion in revenue for 2024. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/11/03/632359/boc-estimates-foregone-revenue-due-to-rice-tariff-cut-at-p16-billion/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Public, private aid to typhoon victims hit over P1B

November 3, 2024 | 8:38 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

By **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**, *Reporter*

PUBLIC and private assistance for victims of two storms that hit the Philippines and its neighbors in the region this month reached over P1 billion as of Saturday, according to the presidential palace, as the number of affected Filipinos climbed to over 8 million.

In an 8 a.m. report, a Philippine disaster agency said Severe Tropical Storm Trami, locally known as Kristine, and Super Typhoon Kong-Rey (Leon) had affected 2.2 million families or 8.63 million individuals.

Over 200,000 people or 56,396 families were staying in 467 evacuation centers, it added.

The death toll was at 146, and 125 of which were still for validation.

The Presidential Communications Office said in a statement food and non-food items provided by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Office of the Civil Defense (OCD), Local Government Units (LGUs), and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) to storm victims have reached P1.1 billion, as of Nov. 3.

The DSWD has released 1.01 million family food packs across regions affected by Trami and Kong-rey, it added.

For their part, the Armed forces of the Philippines had conducted 58 humanitarian sorties with the help of Southeast Asian countries in Naga City in Bicol Region and Batangas province in Calabarzon via land, air, and naval assets, the palace said.

Separately, Defense Secretary Gilberto C. Teodoro, Jr. said the Malaysian government had deployed a disaster management team to the Philippines to help in typhoon response efforts, commending their “swift response to our request for assistance.”

“Your support during this critical time has been invaluable in our recovery efforts following Severe Tropical Storm Kristine, and it exemplifies our strong partnership in times of need.”

Trami, which a green group dubbed as “third highly devastating weather event to batter the country this year,” submerged parts of the Bicol in flood waters, with local authorities saying 70% of residents of Naga City, one of the region’s major economic hubs, had been affected by the storm.

The storm left 59 people dead in Batangas province, 20 of whom were buried in a landslide in the municipality of Talisay, reports from local authorities last week showed.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said in its report that 75 of the 96 seaports affected were already operational and had resumed trips.

Over 180,000 houses were damaged, it said. Damage to infrastructure reached P7.2 billion

Moreover, damage to agriculture hit P4.5 billion, with 106,715 farmers and fisherfolk affected. The Philippine northernmost province of Batanes was visited by a super typhoon just as Trami left, with the OCD Region II reporting “damage to houses and various crops, as well as landslides on major roads.”

The state weather bureau said in a 10 a.m. report on Sunday a low-pressure area (LPA) spotted 1,605 kilometers east of northeastern Mindanao has a “high chance” of developing into a tropical depression within the next 24 hours.

In a 4 a.m. briefing, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said the LPA may not directly affect the country in 24 hours but “may have the possibility to enter PAR (Philippine area of responsibility)” over the next 48 hours.

PAGASA said wind coming from the north-east that brings mild temperatures was expected to bring isolated light rains over Batanes and Babuyan Islands.

The government has already imposed a price freeze on basic necessities in areas under a state of calamity since Trami’s onslaught, and a fisherfolk group is calling for an expansion to cover fish.

Under a Philippine price law, a 60-day freeze can be activated following the declaration of a state of calamity, covering commodities such as canned fish, instant noodles that are locally manufactured, bread, bottled water, processed milk, laundry soap, salt, among others.

Fisherfolk group Pamalakaya at the weekend cited increasing market prices of fish including round scad (*galunggong*), whose cost rose to P220-240 per kilo from P180-200 per kilo prior to the onslaught of the storms.

The group cited tallies from its members at markets in the provinces of Cavite and Rizal, and Quezon City.

The price of tilapia fish and milkfish (*bangus*) also went up to between P160 and P180 per kilo and P180 per kilo, respectively, from P120-P150 per kilo, the group said.

“The typhoons and especially the fisherfolk are not to blame for the rising market price of fish but the private traders that take advantage of calamities to manipulate prices.”

Economists said more subsidies for local producers are needed amid devastation from storms.

‘DISASTER

CAPITALISM’

“Price controls are not going to affect the quantity distortions caused by typhoons. This will only cause greater distortions and shortages as retailers will limit their sales, disincentivizing producers from selling,” Leonardo A. Lanzona, who teaches economics at Ateneo de Manila University said in a Facebook Messenger chat. “The only way to deal with cartels exploiting the situation is to empower non-cartel members, the small farmers and fishermen, to sell their goods directly to the buyers.”

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Chief Economist Michael L. Ricafort said ensuring that traders would not exploit any price controls rests on strong law enforcement.

“Presence of law enforcers cannot be reduced,” he said, as he called for “delicate balance between supply and demand.”

John Paolo R. Rivera, a senior research fellow at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, said temporary price controls post-calamity “would be helpful for consumers as they recover.”

Beyond supply-demand dynamics, price controls “regulate temporary market disequilibrium that results in opportunistic tendencies to raise prices or what we call disaster capitalism.”

“This prioritizes recovery of everyone — consumers are able to buy and producers are able to generate revenues,” he said. “Survival first before capitalism.”

<https://www.bworldonline.com/the-nation/2024/11/03/632258/public-private-aid-to-typhoon-victims-hit-over-p1b/>