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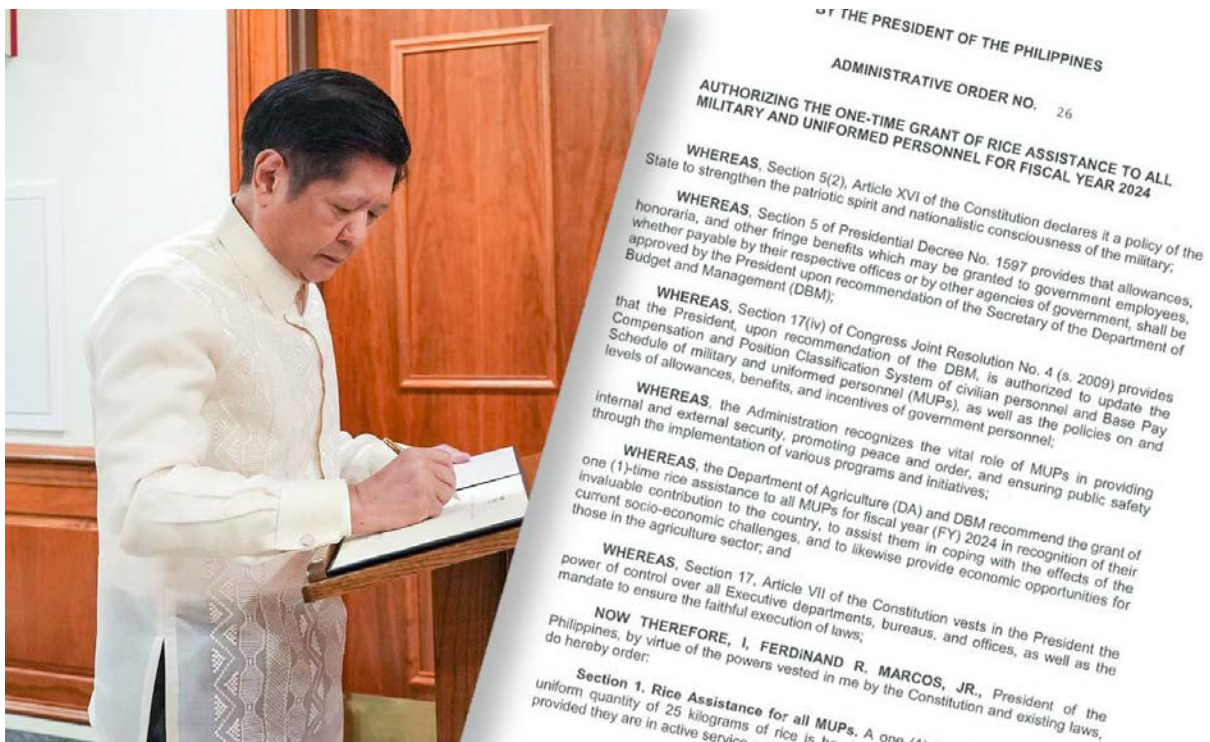
BY ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

Nov 9, 2024 04:53 PM

AT A GLANCE

- The rice distribution shall start from December 2024 to March 2025 in designated National Food Authority (NFA) warehouses to the MUPs' authorized representatives. The NFA shall set the schedule.

President Marcos has granted a one-time rice allowance to all military and uniformed personnel (MUPs) to recognize their vital role in promoting the country's security and peace and order as well as ensuring public safety.



File photos

Administrative Order (AO) No. 26, signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on Nov. 7, stated that 25 kilograms of rice is granted to MUPs provided they are in active service as of Nov. 30, 2024.

It stated that the grant is given to MUPs for their "invaluable contribution to the country, to assist them in coping with the effects of current socioeconomic challenges."

It also seeks to provide economic opportunities for those in the agriculture sector.

The AO covers Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) military personnel under the Department of National Defense (DND) and uniformed personnel of the following agencies:

- Philippine National Police (PNP)
- Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP)
- Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP)
- Philippine Public Safety College
- Bureau of Corrections (BuCor)
- Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)
- National Mapping and Resource Information Authority

Based on the AO, the one-time rice grant shall be sourced from local and participating farmers of the Department of Agriculture (DA)'s Kadiwa Program.

The rice distribution shall start from December 2024 to March 2025 in designated National Food Authority (NFA) warehouses to the MUPs' authorized representatives. The NFA shall set the schedule.

The funding requirement for this grant shall be charged against the Contingent Fund under the General Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2024.

The AO tasks the DA and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), in consultation with the NFA, to formulate and issue the necessary guidelines for this AO within 15 days.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/11/9/Marcos-OKs-rice-grant-MUPs>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Top rice importer Philippines to buy more from Vietnam

BY BEN ARNOLD DE VERA

Nov 9, 2024 01:16 PM

The Philippines is poised to not only remain as the world's No. 1 rice importer for the third-consecutive year but also buy from abroad a new record-high 5.1 million metric tons (MT) during the current marketing period, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The USDA-Foreign Agricultural Service's (FAS) newest "Grain: World Markets and Trade" report on Nov. 8 further hiked estimated Philippine rice imports for marketing year (MY) 2024-2025 from 4.9 million MT last month due to "growing consumption, as rice is an important staple" in the country.

The USDA also increased its rice consumption forecast for the country to 17.2 million MT in MY 2024-2025 from 17.1 million MT previously.

According to the USDA's website, the Philippines' MY for milled rice begins in July of the current year until June of the next year, which means MY 2024-2025 refers to the July 2024-to-June 2025 period.

In the preceding MY 2023-2024, the USDA's updated estimates showed that the Philippines imported five million MT of rice, higher than the earlier projection of 4.7 million MT.

The USDA noted that Vietnamese rice exporters benefit from "burgeoning" Philippine demand.

"The Philippines is importing record amounts due to a combination of population growth and reduced import tariffs [under] Executive Order (EO) No. 62. Thus far in 2024, the Philippines relied on Vietnam for more than 80 percent of imports," the USDA said.

"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," it added.

Despite lower yields there, projections for Vietnam's rice exports were jacked up by the USDA to a record 8.9 million MT (from 8.6 million MT previously) for 2024 and 7.35 million MT (from 7.2 million MT previously) for 2025, mainly on the back of expected bigger demand from the Philippines.

As a whole, surging Philippine purchases are among the growth drivers that the USDA cited for higher global rice imports this and next year.

If the USDA's forecasts would happen, the Philippines shall be the world's largest rice importer since MY 2022-2023, when it sourced 3.9 million MT of the food staple overseas and dislodged China from the top spot.

Philippine milled production has been decreasing from 12.625 million MT in MY 2022-2023 to 12.325 million MT in 2023-2024 and 12.3 million MT in 2024-2025.

On the other hand, rice consumption in the country has been rising from 14.8 million MT in MY 2020-2021 to 15.4 million MT in 2021-2022, 16.1 million MT in 2022-2023, and 16.6 million MT in 2023-2024.

The USDA kept its projected Philippine ending stocks—rice inventory at the end of the MY—at 3.703 million MT in the current MY, up from 2023-2024's 3.603 million MT.

In the same USDA-FAS report, the Philippines' corn imports were forecasted to hit a record 1.65 million MT in MY 2024-2025 because of more exports from Myanmar, up from the previous estimate of 1.35 million MT for the current MY and above the previous record of 1.6 million MT in 2023-2024.

While "lower world corn exports and a small recovery in production are moderating growth" of Philippine imports, the USDA said demand here "continues to grow primarily due to higher use of corn feed by the livestock and poultry industry, as well as higher industrial use for snacks and starch."

"However, production of corn in the Philippines has not kept pace with rising demand. Producers have been hampered by pest infestations, typhoons, and a lack of land in recent years," the USDA pointed out.

"In 2023-2024, production was 8.1 million tons, the lowest volume since 2019-2020. As a result, larger imports were necessary to meet domestic demand—reaching 16 percent of total supplies in 2023-2024, versus four percent in 2019-2020," it added. The USDA expects the country's corn output to rebound to 8.3 million MT in MY 2024-2025.

As tariffs slapped on imported corn have been slashed since mid-2022, the USDA noted that "overall imports surged 56 percent in 2022-2023 and 68 percent in 2023-2024, with non-ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] exporters augmenting volumes."

Citing data from the Bureau of Customs (BOC) and the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the USDA said ASEAN member-states accounted for "virtually all" corn imports in 2021-2022, even as neighboring Southeast Asian countries lost one-third of its market share to Brazil in 2022-2023, and further reduced import volumes to half of our country's total in 2023-2024 no thanks to a 35-percent jump in Argentinian exports.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/11/9/ph-rice-imports-from-vietnam-to-increase>

MANILA BULLETIN:

No shortage of agri products during holiday season due to imports—DA

BY JEL SANTOS

Nov 8, 2024 03:14 PM



DA spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa (JEL SANTOS/MB PHOTO)

As the Christmas season approaches, the Department of Agriculture (DA) assured on Friday, Nov. 8, that the supply of agricultural products is stable, with imports supplementing local production to meet the country's needs.

“Walang shortage ng supply kasi nababalanse ng importation (There is no supply shortage because imports help balance it,” Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa, the spokesperson of the DA, said when asked if the supply of agricultural products is enough for the upcoming holiday season.

He noted that vegetable production in the country is ample.

“Sobra yung production natin sa highland vegetables, ‘yung lowland vegetable ang medyo ang may kaunting problema (We have surplus production in highland vegetables, but there is a bit of an issue with lowland vegetables),” De Mesa said, saying the production of lowland vegetables was badly affected by the typhoons,

Meanwhile, De Mesa said that while African Swine Fever (ASF) poses challenges to pork supply, the holiday season requirements for both pork and chicken have already been planned for.

“Kung ano man ang pagkukulang, na-settle na nila ‘yan. Na-take into consideration na for the rest of the holiday season. So we don't see any concern (Any shortfall has already been settled

and taken into consideration for the rest of the holiday season, so we don't see any issues),” he went on.

Citing the DA's latest production data, De Mesa noted that chicken and livestock are “saving” the portion of the production value.

“Sa manok, wala tayong ine-expect na pagtaas kasi maganda ‘yung ating production (For chicken, we don't expect any price increase because our production is strong).”

The DA spokesperson said the country's sugar supply is still enough, saying there is “no major movement” on sugar.

So far, he said that the Philippines still has no plan to import sugar.

With global rice prices declining, the DA expressed optimism that local prices of this staple will also drop.

Metro retailers vow affordable rice

On Friday, Nov. 8, rice retailers from major markets in Metro Manila agreed to start selling more affordably priced regular and well-milled rice beginning next week.

Market vendors made this commitment during a consultative meeting held last week by DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., which aimed to investigate why retail rice prices have not reflected the significant reduction in rice tariffs.

In a prior meeting, rice importers and traders told Undersecretary for Operations Roger Navarro that they had lowered prices to approximately P38 per kilo. They pointed to the markups imposed by rice retailers as the reason for the continued high retail prices.

The DA reported that rice retailers from major markets in Manila, Quezon City, Caloocan City, Pasig City, Las Piñas City, Taguig City, and Pasay City told DA officials that a price markup of ₱3 to ₱5 per kilo would give them a sufficient profit margin.

“They have agreed to sell well-milled rice for around P42 per kilo after we appealed to their sense of patriotism. We asked them to help ease the burden on the poor by providing more affordable rice,” Navarro stated.

Since the tariff reduction in July, nearly 1.7 million metric tons of imported rice have entered the country, according to data from the Bureau of Customs as of the first week of November.

In an effort to reduce rice prices, President Marcos issued Executive Order No. 62, which lowered the import tax on rice from 35 percent to 15 percent, effective July 8. High rice prices have a significant impact on the consumer basket, contributing to inflation.

Per the Philippine Statistics Authority, the average Filipino household spends approximately ₱9 of every ₱100 on rice, with this amount doubling to ₱18 for poorer families.

https://mb.com.ph/2024/11/8/no-shortage-of-agri-products-during-holiday-season-due-to-imports-da#google_vignette

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA: No shortage of agriculture products this holiday season

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

November 9, 2024 | 12:00am



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

Walter Bollozos / The Philippine STAR

MANILA, Philippines — A ranking official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) yesterday assured the public that there will be no shortage in the supply of agriculture products, including lechon, amid the expected increase in demand during the holidays.

At a press conference, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said the damage brought by the successive typhoons on farm commodities will be compensated through importation.

“We will have no problem as we are able to balance this through the importation of rice and fish. For vegetables, we have enough supply as we have so much production of highland vegetables.

For lowland (vegetables), we have a problem but the recovery is fast,” De Mesa said.

The agriculture official added that the movement in the retail price of pork can be attributed to the increase in demand and the impact of the outbreaks of African swine fever (ASF).

“This (price increase) is the combined effect of the increase in the demand this last quarter plus of course we still have the problem of ASF,” De Mesa added.

Hog raisers have already recovered from the ASF scare, according to De Mesa.

At the same time, he assured the public of enough supply of lechon during Christmas as he confirmed the increase in the demand of the dish using native pigs.

“We have many native pigs, particularly in Southern Tagalog, Quezon (province and) Cavite areas. The native pigs were also affected (by ASF), but we have many production of native pigs,” De Mesa said.

He added that there will be no problem in the supply of chicken and eggs.

De Mesa said that a P1 to P2 per kilo hike is expected in the retail price of rice in December amid the increase in demand.

“Normally, there is also a movement in vegetables and pork. For rice, we are still hoping that it will go down. For chicken and eggs, we don’t expect movement. For onions, we expect the retail price to go down and for sugar, it is pretty stable,” he added.

Based on DA’s monitoring, the retail price of pork shoulder ranged between P275 and P360 per kilo; pork belly, between P310 and P395 per kilo; whole chicken, between P140 and P220 per kilo and medium-sized eggs, between P8 and P9 per kilo.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/11/09/2398742/da-no-shortage-agriculture-products-holiday-season>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Farmers dump onions amid glut of imported bulbs

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

November 9, 2024 | 12:00am



Onion farmers in Nueva Ecija have been forced to dump their produce as imported bulbs flood the markets, making them unable to sell their stocks.

Pixabay

MANILA, Philippines — During the holiday season in 2022, the country saw an unprecedented onion crisis, with retail prices of the bulbs hitting an eye-watering P700 a kilo.

The crisis was blamed partly on wrong importation policy that was not in sync with the local harvest.

This holiday season, the government is not taking any chances, and is flooding the country with imports. And local onion farmers are crying.

Onion farmers in Nueva Ecija have been forced to dump their produce as imported bulbs flood the markets, making them unable to sell their stocks.

In a radio interview yesterday, Lot Manibog, a farmer from Nueva Ecija, said the dumping of onions will persist as the bulbs are rotting in cold storage facilities because traders patronize imported white onions, even though the wholesale price of local and imported onions is the same.

Manibog said the Department of Agriculture (DA) allowed the early importation of white onions despite the availability of the local produce in cold storage facilities.

For his part, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa maintained that Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. only approved a minimal volume of imported white onions to ensure enough supply during the holidays.

“We did not approve the importation for red onions. If there are (imported red onions), these are smuggled but we are trying to intercept them,” he said.

Tiu Laurel has approved the importation of 16,000 metric tons of white onions.

Based on monitoring of the DA, the retail price of local red onions ranged between P75 and P150 per kilo and local white onions, P150 per kilo; imported white onions, between P60 and P160 per kilo.

P43-P45/kilo rice

Meanwhile, the DA yesterday said that P43 to P45 per kilo of regular and well-milled rice will be available starting next week after leaders of market associations in Metro Manila made the commitment following a meeting with officials of the agency.

At a press conference, De Mesa added that during the meeting, representatives from at least 30 markets in the National Capital Region agreed to increase their retail prices between P3 and P5 per kilo.

“Basically, we agreed that their profit for regular and well-milled rice will be between P3 and P5 (per kilo). The other types of rice are not included in the agreement,” De Mesa said.

Tiu Laurel has ordered a meeting with presidents of large markets in Metro Manila to determine why rice prices remain stubbornly high in many places, despite the implementation of Executive Order No. 62, which lowered the tariff on imported grains to 15 percent from 35 percent.

DA Undersecretary for operations Roger Navarro led the meeting with the market associations.

“We are monitoring 30 markets in the National Capital Region every day from Monday to Saturday,” De Mesa said.

He said rice retailers will be linked to traders to ensure that they can comply with the P43 to P45 per kilo of regular and well-milled rice.

He said that after Metro Manila, the DA will also meet with retailers in other parts of Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao.

At the same time, De Mesa admitted that the retail price of local rice is still lower compared to imported rice as local regular rice is sold for as low as P40 per kilo compared to the imported regular rice of P45 per kilo.

Based on monitoring of the DA, the retail price of local well-milled rice is sold as low as P44 per kilo compared to the imported well-milled rice of P45 per kilo.

At a recent meeting with rice importers from Bulacan, traders told Navarro and chief of staff Undersecretary Alvin Balagbag that they have lowered prices to around P38 per kilo, attributing the high retail prices to retailers.

EO 62, which took effect on July 7, aims to bring down rice prices. Tiu Laurel cited the need to consult with market leaders to uncover the reasons behind the still elevated rice prices.

Meanwhile, De Mesa gave assurance that the government targets to expand the availability of P29 per kilo of rice in Kadiwa centers by next year as beneficiaries of the program went early to the National Irrigation Administration in Quezon City to avail themselves of the cheap staple.

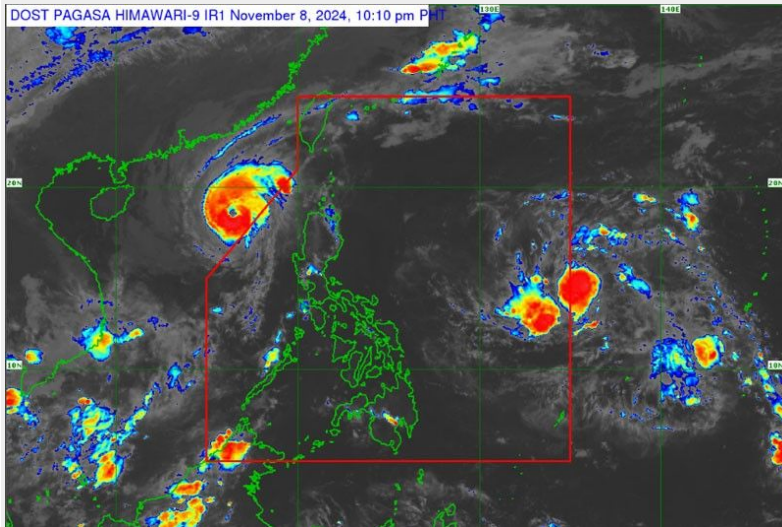
<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/11/09/2398743/farmers-dump-onions-amid-glut-imported-bulbs>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Marce exits after battering Cagayan; new LPA looms

[Romina Cabrera](#) - The Philippine Star

November 9, 2024 | 12:00am



The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said there is high chance that a cyclone could form or enter PAR next week.

PAGASA Satellite

MANILA, Philippines — Another tropical cyclone is forecast to enter the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR) in the next few days after the exit of Typhoon Marce.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said there is high chance that a cyclone could form or enter PAR next week.

A tropical cyclone-like vortex has a high probability of developing while approaching east of Luzon.

Once developed into a cyclone, the weather disturbance is likely to traverse the Northern-Central Luzon area.

The cyclone will be named Nika and will again hit the areas of Northern Luzon still reeling from the onslaught of Marce.

Marce, with international name Yinxing, carried maximum sustained winds of 150 kilometers per hour and gustiness of up to 185 kph as it exited PAR.

All tropical cyclone wind signals have been lifted by PAGASA.

The trough of the typhoon is still bringing isolated rains over La Union, Pangasinan and Zambales. Localized thunderstorms may bring isolated rains over Metro Manila and the rest of the country.

PAGASA warned of possible flash floods or landslides during severe thunderstorms.

Marce's aftermath

Typhoon Marce affected a total of 7,233 families or 20,674 people in various provinces in at least three regions in Northern Luzon.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said 239 barangays from 45 localities in the Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) experienced heavy rains and flooding.

Of those affected, 3,958 families or 11,476 people sought temporary shelter at 186 different evacuation centers, while others stayed at home or with relatives in safer areas.

The NDRRMC, as of yesterday's monitoring, said there have so far been no reported deaths, injuries or missing persons related to Typhoon Marce.

It gave assurance that those most affected and displaced are receiving relief goods and other basic needs, especially those staying in evacuation centers.

The NDRRMC is yet to release data on estimated damage to agriculture, infrastructure and houses in affected regions.

Response

The Philippine Coast Guard's BRP Teresa Magbanua sailed to the Port of Albay last Nov. 7 with family food packs from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), reported the agency.

The family food packs came from Cebu City, and would be given to residents of the Bicol region who fell victim to Severe Tropical Storm Kristine, it noted.

Meanwhile, the PCG's BRP Gabriela Silang, which carried 5,500 family food packs from DSWD, arrived in Batanes that was hit by Super Typhoon Leon.

Batanes Gov. Marilou Cayco thanked the crew of the Gabriela Silang "for their dedicated service in transporting the relief supplies to Batanes" last Nov. 4.

The same vessel also delivered over 8,000 family food packs from Manila to Batanes last Nov. 7 for Kristine storm victims.

The PCG said its personnel helped evacuate around 700 families in Aparri and Cagayan while Marce was dumping heavy rains and blowing strong winds over the province.

Meanwhile, Brig. Gen. Jean Fajardo, Philippine National Police (PNP) spokesperson, said at least 600 police officers were deployed in Ilocos, Cagayan Valley and CAR, which were among the areas hit by Marce.

Fajardo told reporters that police have so far conducted 24 humanitarian operations in Cagayan Valley.

She said seven police infrastructure were damaged by the storm.

There were two preemptive evacuations of residents in areas in Cagayan Valley, Fajardo said.

Class suspensions

In La Union, classes in all levels, both private and public, and work in government offices – aside from frontline services – were suspended yesterday due to Typhoon Marce.

Gov. Raffy Ortega-David canceled work at the capitol, while local government executives in 19 towns and San Fernando City enacted their own calls, due to strong winds and heavy rains brought by Marce.

David said that 105 families or 257 persons in Barangay Mindoro, Bangar town were evacuated. La Union is under storm signal No. 2 as of yesterday.

In Cagayan, road systems and other government structures, such as schools, suffered the brunt of Marce's wrath.

The roofs of almost all of the buildings at Buguey North Central School were ripped apart by powerful winds on Thursday afternoon, the Cagayan Provincial Information Office (CPIO) reported, with all learning materials destroyed.

School facilities at the Licerio Antiporda National High School Main campus were not spared, reports added.

The public works department in Region II initially declared numerous roads and bridges impassable as of Friday morning.

The Batanes district engineering office reported that the San Vicente-Savidug-Chavayan-Sumnanga-Nakanmuan Road in Barangay Nakanmuan, Sabtang, Batanes was shut down because of rock slides.

The Cagayan 1st district engineering office also reported that the Junction Gattaran-Cumao-Capissayan-Sta. Margarita Bolos Road at Piña Weste, Gattaran town was not passable as of yesterday morning because of high water levels.

Motorists were advised to take the alternate route of Baybayog-Baggao-Dalin-Sta. Margarita Road.

A number of bridges were also rendered impassable: Anquiray-Abolo Steel Bridge, the Annabuculan-Tana Bridge and the Cordova-Goran Bridge in Amulung, which had become submerged.

Very strong winds and rains destroyed a concrete house in Abulug town, while several houses and buildings were damaged in Ballesteros, Aparri and Pamplona towns.

Cagayan Gov. Manuel Mamba with retired PNP chief Edgar Aglipay yesterday oversaw relief goods distribution to evacuees in Gonzaga town.

According to the Gonzaga Municipal Social Welfare Development Office, at least 704 families or 1,035 people were brought to safety from barangays Minanga, Caroan and Pateng.

Communities in Buguey, Lal-lo, Allacapan remained underwater as of yesterday, the CPIO added.

DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian heads to Cagayan tomorrow.

Korea donates \$500,000

Meanwhile, South Korea has provide humanitarian assistance worth \$500,000, through the World Food Program, to support relief efforts in response to typhoon devastation.

The Korean embassy expressed hope that the aid will help in “the swift return to daily life” of affected residents. — **Michael Punongbayan, Ghio Ong, Emmanuel Tupas, Jun Elias, Artemio Dumlao**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/11/09/2398751/marce-exits-after-battering-cagayan-new-lpa-looms>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

PH to benefit from India's removal of MEP on rice exports

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 10:30 AM November 08, 2024



A worker packs a sack filled with rice on the outskirts of the western Indian city of Ahmedabad February 27, 2015. REUTERS/Amit Dave/File Photo

The Philippines stands to benefit from the Indian government's move to scrap the floor price on its rice exports as the recent development is expected to stabilize retail prices and supply of rice.

Rowena Sadicon, founder of the Philippine Rice Information System, said the removal of the minimum export price (MEP) for India's non-basmati white rice exports "comes at a critical time" as recent typhoons damaged rice plantations in the country.

"This move may allow the Philippines to import more affordable rice, helping to stabilize prices and prevent potential shortages," Sadicon said in her speech during the World Rice Conference held in Pasay City.

It can be recalled that India imposed a ban on exporting non-basmati rice in July last year to keep domestic prices low and secure its supply ahead of elections.

Some 14 months later, India lifted the export ban on non-basmati white and set an MEP of \$490 per ton. Last month, the South Asian country removed the export price to improve farmers' income while boosting overseas shipments.

“While this development provides immediate relief, it's crucial to balance imports with local production support to protect our farmers. Excessive imports could harm local farmers, especially if production costs remain high,” she added.

Sadicon said consumers found relief from the reduction of rice tariffs, with retail prices dropping by P5 to P7 per kilogram. However, she said farmers have borne the brunt of global market factors affecting local prices, as palay prices declined to P22 to P24.50 per kg.

“And what about the traders and millers? This is the reality: many rice industry traders and importers have incurred substantial losses,” she added.

As of Oct. 31, the country imported 3.79 million metric tons (MT) of rice, data from the Bureau of Plant Industry showed. It already surpassed last year's import volume of 3.6 million MT.

Vietnam still topped the list of rice suppliers, supplying nearly 3 million of the total, followed by Thailand (470,273.28 MT) and Pakistan (175,174.48 MT).

India delivered 22,058.64 MT more than a month after lifting the rice export moratorium, although the figure was higher than the 13,794.63 MT it exported in 2023.

Sadicon echoed their group's push for accessible data to accurately predict domestic supply and demand of the staple food, adding, “Our focus remains on supporting local farmers while responsibly managing imports to secure long-term.”

The El Niño weather phenomenon and the consecutive typhoons that struck the country heavily weighed on the agriculture sector, particularly rice as losses climbed to billions of pesos as of writing.

From the combined effects of typhoons Kristine and Leon, damage to rice totaled P5.05 billion as of Thursday, based on the Department of Agriculture's bulletin.

The two typhoons wiped out 271,464 MT of rice, mostly in reproductive and maturity stages.

Agriculture assistant secretary Arnel de Mesa recently said that the severe impact of recent typhoons and the El Niño phenomenon on the farm sector is expected to slash the country's palay output this year.

<https://business.inquirer.net/488953/ph-to-benefit-from-indias-removal-of-mep-on-rice-exports>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA: Food supply in Christmas is stable despite disasters, ASF

By: [Stephanie Sevillano](#) -

[Philippine News Agency](#) / 07:30 PM November 08, 2024



CHRISTMAS AND HIGH PRICES Consumers buy fruits and vegetables at a market in Quiapo, Manila in this file photo. These food staples have become more expensive in some areas due to various circumstances like calamities. **INQUIRER / RICHARD A. REYES**

MANILA, Philippines – The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Friday assured a stable food supply for the Christmas season despite the effects of successive weather disturbances and African swine fever (ASF).

The DA made the assurance after the DA – Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Operations Center reported about 317,316 metric tons (MT) volume of

production loss worth PHP6.83 billion in the agri-fishery sector due to the onslaught of Severe Tropical Storm Kristine (international name Trami) and Typhoon Leon (Kong-rey).

In an interview, DA Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa said supply stability is expected across all agricultural commodities with minimal price spikes expected amid the Christmas season demand.

“Walang supply (shortage) kasi nababalanse ng importation nung sa bigas, isda, sa gulay naman enough iyong production natin (There’s no supply shortage because it is balanced by rice and fish importation. For vegetables, we have enough production),” he said.

The DA earlier reported the arrival of 3.7 million MT of imported rice, which is expected to cover the gap in local production, with palay production loss logged at more than 800,000 MT, breaching the 500,000 MT to 600,000 MT annual average palay output loss.

For fish production, which incurred 1,780 MT volume production loss amounting to PHP665.01 million after Kristine and Leon, De Mesa said the 30,000 MT of imported fish from China and Vietnam have begun to arrive by batches after the onset of the annual closed fishing season.

In terms of vegetables, De Mesa said supply remains stable with lowland vegetables expected to recover in weeks.

The DA-DRRM reported at least 37,233 MT of volume loss in high-value crops, amounting to PHP880.15 million due to the effects of Kristine and Leon.

De Mesa said there is also enough supply of native hogs for lechon, or roasted pigs, for Christmas despite the effects of ASF.

“Sa baboy, bagamat may problema tayo sa ASF, iyong requirements natin for the holiday season na-programmed na iyan. So, kung ano man iyong pagkukulang na-

settle na nila iyan (For pork, even though we have a problem in ASF, our requirements for the holiday season are already programmed. Whatever may be the gap is already settled) for the rest of the holiday season. So, we don't see any concern," he said.

As of August, 450.36 million kg. of imported pork have arrived in the country since January, according to the DA-Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI).

Meanwhile, the DA has ongoing relief and recovery efforts to help all affected sectors in agriculture.

These include the distribution of P541.02 million worth of agricultural inputs, including rice, corn, and vegetable seedlings, as well as drugs and biologics for livestock and poultry; a P500 million loanable fund through the Survival and Recovery Loan (SURE) program of the Agricultural Credit Policy, which is equivalent to a P25,000 loanable amount per farmer, payable for three years with zero interest; the P1 billion Quick Response Fund (QRF) for the rehabilitation and recovery of affected areas; about P667 million worth of indemnification fund; the deployment of Kadiwa food trucks for cheaper commodities; and the distribution of rice stocks from the National Food Authority (NFA) to disaster-hit areas.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2002714/da-food-supply-in-christmas-is-stable-despite-disasters-asf>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Banks ramped up agri lending in H1 — BSP

By: [Ian Nicolas P. Cigaral @ipcigaral](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 09:46 AM November 08, 2024



Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (File photo / Philippine Daily Inquirer)

Banks stepped up their support to agriculture in the first half of 2024 by exceeding their mandated lending quota for the important—but long-neglected—sector, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said.

In its latest report on the Philippine financial system, the BSP, citing preliminary figures, said that banks allocated P1.7 trillion as credit to the farm sector in the first six months of the year. This includes loans extended to farmers, fisherfolk, agrarian reform beneficiaries and members of their household.

That accounted for 192.4 percent of lenders' total loanable funds during the period, which amounted to P912.7 billion.

This means local banks went beyond their quota for agriculture lending. Under the law, banks must allocate 25 percent of their total loanable funds for agriculture, fisheries and rural development.

The BSP said the 192.4-percent compliance rate of banks in the first semester was higher than the comparable period last year, when lenders set aside 36.4 percent or P3.1 trillion of their total loanable funds that had amounted to P8.4 trillion.

Banks were able to help the agriculture sector as it continued to register strong growth postpandemic.

BSP data showed the total loan book of the entire local banking system expanded by 12.4 percent to P14.3 trillion in the six months through June—beating the 8.8 percent growth last year and inching closer to the prepandemic growth rate of 13.8 percent—despite the high interest rate environment that may curb appetite for credit.

“The BSP’s financial reforms help sustain the resilience of the banking sector, enabling banks to take a bigger role in the domestic economy through continued financial services to their clients,” BSP Governor Eli Remolona Jr. said.

Left behind

Historically, agriculture accounted for about a tenth of gross domestic product (GDP) and employed around a quarter of Filipino workers. But advancement in other economic sectors had left behind the industry, which the government is now struggling to expand.

According to the 2022 Countryside Bank Survey (CBS) report of the BSP and the Department of Agriculture, vulnerabilities to natural calamities and harvesting uncertainties remain the most common problems that banks face when extending credit to agriculture. These inherent risks, the report said, were aggravated by the pandemic, which had affected the health and livelihood of farmers and jeopardized their capacity to pay bank loans.

At the same time, agricultural borrowers often struggle to meet basic credit criteria, making it challenging for them to secure loans. The BSP had reported that banks still require traditional loan securities from agricultural borrowers, mainly favoring real estate mortgages.

To encourage more lending, banks previously polled by the BSP stressed the importance of credit support mechanisms like guarantees and loan insurance, access to borrower information, and crop insurance.

<https://business.inquirer.net/488945/banks-ramped-up-agri-lending-in-h1-bsp>

REMATE:

Food supply sa Pasko sapat sa kabila ng kalamidad, ASF – DA

November 9, 2024 15:06



MANILA, Philippines- Stable ang food supply sa darating na Kapaskuhan sa kabila ng epekto ng sunod-sunod na pagbagyo at African swine fever (ASF).

Tiniyak ito ng Department of Agriculture (DA- Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Operations Center matapos nitong iulat na may 317,316 metric tons (MT) volume ng production loss na nagkakahalaga ng P6.83 billion sa agri-fishery sector dahil sa pananalasa ng Severe Tropical Storm Kristine (international name Trami) at Typhoon Leon (Kong-rey).

Sa isang panayam, sinabi ni DA Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa na inaasahan na magiging matatag ang suplay sa lahat ng agricultural commodities na may ‘minimal’ na pagsipa ng presyo sa gitna ng Christmas season demand. “Walang supply (shortage) kasi nababalanse ng importation nung sa bigas, isda, sa gulay naman enough iyong production natin,” ayon kay De Mesa.

Nauna rito, iniulat ng DA ang pagdating ng 3.7 million MT na imported rice, inaasahan na matatakpan ang gap sa local production, naiulat na ang pagkalugi sa palay production ay mahigit sa 800,000 MT, nalampasan ang 500,000 MT hanggang 600,000 MT na annual average palay output loss.

Para sa fish production, nagtamo ito ng 1,780 MT volume production loss na nagkakahalaga ng P665.01 million matapos ang Kristine at Leon, winika ni De Mesa na ang 30,000 MT na imported fish ay mula Tsina at Vietnam ay nagsimulang dumating 'by batches' matapos magsulat ang taunang pagsasara ng fishing season.

Pagdating naman sa gulay, sinabi ni De Mesa na nananatiling matatag ang suplay nito kung saan ang itinuturing na lowland vegetables ay inaasahan na makababawi sa mga susunod na linggo.

Iniulat ng DA-DRRM na 37,233 MT ang volume loss sa high-value crops, nagkakahalaga ng P880.15 million dahil sa apekto ng Kristine at Leon.

Sinabi pa ni De Mesa na sapat din ang suplay ng native na baboy para sa lechon, o roasted pigs, para sa Pasko sa kabila ng epekto naman ng ASF.

“Sa baboy, bagamat may problema tayo sa ASF, iyong requirements natin for the holiday season na-programmed na iyan. So, kung ano man iyong pagkukulang na-settle na nila iyan for the rest of the holiday season. So, we don't see any concern,” anito.

Hanggang noong Agosto, 450.36 million kg. ng imported pork and dumating sa bansa simula Enero, ayon sa DA-Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI).

Samantala, nagpapatuloy naman ang relief at recovery efforts ng DA para tulungan ang lahat ng apektadong sektor sa agrikultura.

Kabilang dito ang distribusyon ng P541.02 milyong halaga ng agricultural inputs, kabilang na ang bigas, mais at vegetable seedlings, at maging ang drugs at biologics para sa livestock at poultry; P500 milyong loanable fund sa pamamagitan ng Survival and Recovery Loan (SURE) program ng Agricultural Credit Policy, katumbas ng P25,000 loanable na halaga kada magsasaka, maaaring itong bayaran sa loob ng tatlong taon na may zero interest; P1 billion Quick Response Fund (QRF) para sa rehabilitation and recovery efforts sa mga apektadong lugar; may P667 milyong halaga ng indemnification fund; deployment ng Kadiwa food trucks para sa mas murang kalakal; at distribusyon ng rice stocks mula National Food Authority (NFA) sa disaster-hit areas. **Kris Jose**

<https://remate.ph/food-supply-sa-pasko-sapat-sa-kabila-ng-kalamidad-asf-da/>

REMATE:

P43/kilong bigas sa NCR mabibili sa sunod na linggo

November 9, 2024 11:06



MANILA, Philippines- Sinabi ng Department of Agriculture (DA) nitong Biyernes na maaari nang makabili ang consumers sa Metro Manila ng karagdagang regular at well-milled rice na nagkakahalaga ng P43 kada kilo sa susunod na linggo kasunod ng mga pulong kasama ang local market association heads.

“Basically, we agreed na iyong kanilang kita dapat for regular and well-milled rice ay between PHP3 to PHP5,” pahayag ni DA Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa sa isang panayam.

Sa napagkasunduang margin profit, sinabi niya na ang presyo kada kilo ng regular at well-milled rice ay hindi dapat lumampas ng P45, dahil pumapalo ang wholesale prices mula P34 hanggang P38 mula sa importers at traders.

Base sa DA monitoring, ang umiiral na average price ng regular at well-milled rice sa National Capital Region (NCR) ay nananatili sa “unacceptable” level na P50 kada kilo.

“With this agreement, we’re hoping na ma-sustain na hindi lang siya piling (pamilihan). Kapag regular at well-milled, talagang hindi dapat tataas ng PHP45 sa pamilihan,” wika ni De Mesa.

Binanggit din niya ang mga planong direktang iugnay ang market heads sa importers o traders bilang kanilang suppliers, kasabay ng pinaigting na monitoring sa local markets upang maiwasan ang profiteering.

“Starting next week, part ng kasunduan is monitoring natin regularly. We are monitoring 30 markets NCR-wide from Monday to Saturday. Part ito ng monitoring natin at maghihigpit tayo,” dagdag ni De Mesa.

Nakatakang inspeksyunin ng DA ang local markets sa Quezon City at Manila upang matiyak ang pagtalima sa kasunduan.

Bukod sa mas mababang presyo ng bigas, nilalayon din ng kasunduan na matiyak ang koordinasyon sa posibilidad ng pagtatatag ng Kadiwa sites sa mga piling pamilihan.

Ipinag-utos ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. sa DA na palawigin ang pagbebenta ng P29 at Rice for All programs sa mas maraming Kadiwa ng Pangulo stores sa buong bansa. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/p43-kilong-big-as-sa-ncr-mabibili-sa-sunod-na-linggo/>

REMATE:

DA: Commercial rollout ng ASF vsx inaasahan sa pagtatapos ng taon

November 9, 2024 11:20



MANILA, Philippines- Umaasa ang Department of Agriculture na malapit nang masimulan ang commercial rollout ng African Swine Fever (ASF) vaccine sa Pilipinas.

Ani DA spokesperson Asec. Arnel De Mesa, inaasahan nilang aaprubahan ng Food and Drug Administration ang commercial release ng bakuna bago matapos ang taon.

“Sa ngayon po, ang inaprubahan lang ng FDA ‘yung tinatawag na monitored release nitong bakuna kung saan ay gobyerno pa lang po ang tanging pwedeng gumamit. ‘Pag commercial ay pwede na po sa general public,” paliwanag ni De Mesa.

Matatandaang nag-suplay ang pamahalaan ng 10,000 ASF bakuna sa Batangas na inaasahan ng ahensya na magagamit sa ikatlong linggo ng Nobyembre.

“In-open up na natin sa commercial farms at semi-commercial farms itong pagpapabakuna and ine-expect natin bago matapos ang taon ay maaprubahan ng FDA ‘yung tinagtawag na commercial approval,” dagdag ng opisyal. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/da-commercial-rollout-ng-asf-vsx-inaasahan-sa-pagtatapos-ng-taon/>

REMATE:

Palit-planting season pinag-aaralan sa Pinas iwas-pinsala sa bagyo

November 8, 2024 16:10



MANILA, Philippines – Pinag-aaralan ng National Irrigation Administration (NIA) na ilipat ang kalendaryo ng pagtatanim ng sektor ng agrikultura bilang isang pangmatagalang solusyon sa mapangwasak na epekto ng mga bagyo sa mababang palayan ng bansa at panahon ng ani.

Sinabi ni NIA Administrator Engr. Eduardo Guillen habang ikinalungkot niya ang 350,000 metrikong tonelada ng bigas na napinsala ng Bagyong “Kristine” kamakailan. Ito ay katumbas ng humigit-kumulang P6 bilyong pagkawala ng bigas at P300 milyong halaga ng pinsala para sa imprastraktura ng agrikultura.

Ayon sa opisyal ang nasabing mga pagkalugi, na aniya ay mga epekto ng pagbabago ng klima, ay nagpasigla kay Pangulong Marcos na utusan ang NIA na maglagay ng mga pangmatagalang solusyon na tutugon sa mga epekto ng bagyo sa mga lupang sakahan sa hinaharap.

“Mayroon po tayong move ngayon, para pangmatagalang solusyon na ito, nililipat na po natin iyong ating cropping calendar ng dalawa—gusto natin, mag-dalawang dry cropping tayo eh paliwanag nito nitong Miyerkules Nov.6.

Sinabi pa ng administrator ng NIA ang kalendaryo ng dry cropping ay itatakda mula Oktubre hanggang Hulyo, kung saan ang Pebrero at Hulyo ay ang panahon ng pag-aani.

“Kapag na-secure po natin iyong dalawa ani natin ng dalawang dry cropping season, okay na po tayo eh,” ayon kay Guillen .

“At saka kapag sa dry season kasi tayo magtanim, mas mataas ang yield. So, inaasahan po natin na itong move na ito ay makakapagpataas ng ating production (And when we plant in the dry season, the yield is higher. So, we are expecting this move to increase the production),” dagdag pa ng opisyal .

Ang mga tagubilin ni Marcos ay dumating sa gitna ng pangamba na ang bansa ay makakaranas ng kakulangan sa bigas dahil sa mga pinsalang dulot ng mga bagyo.

Ngunit mabilis na pinawi ng NIA administrator ang naturang mga alalahanin at sinabing ang Department of Agriculture (DA) ay “on top of the situation” kung magkano ang aangkat na bigas sa mga susunod na buwan. (*Santi Celario*)

<https://remate.ph/palit-planting-season-pinag-aaralan-sa-pinas-iwas-pinsala-sa-bagyo/>

REMATE:

Halos P7-B halaga winasak nina Kristine, Leon sa sektor ng agrikultura

November 8, 2024 08:39



MANILA, Philippines – Ang pinsalang dulot ng Bagyong “Kristine” at “Leon” ay pumalo sa halos ₱7 bilyon, iniulat ng Department of Agriculture (DA) noong Huwebes, Nob. 7.

Batay sa Bulletin No. 14 ng DA, sinabi nitong nakaapekto rin ang lagay ng panahon sa 171,080 magsasaka at mangingisda.

Ang mga lugar na sakop ng damage estimate ng agriculture department ay ang Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, CALABARZON, MIMAROPA, Bicol Region, Western, Central, at Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, SOCCSKSARGEN at Caraga Rehiyon.

“Ang pinsala at pagkalugi ay naiulat sa palay, mais, kamoteng kahoy, mataas na halaga ng mga pananim, hayop at manok, pangisdaan, makinarya at kagamitan, at mga imprastraktura ng agrikultura,” sabi ng DA.

Ayon sa DA, naapektuhan ng mga bagyo ang kabuuang 141,971 ektarya (ha) ng mga agricultural areas, na humantong sa dami ng pagkawala ng produksyon sa 317,316 metric tons (MT).

Samantala, sinabi ng ahensya na nasa 1,780 MT ang pagkalugi sa produksyon para sa mga palaisdaan.

Sinabi ng DA na umabot sa ₱5.05 bilyon ang pagkalugi sa produksyon ng palay, na nakakaapekto sa 131,168 ektarya at umaabot sa 271,464 metriko tonelada, na 1.34 porsiyento ng kabuuang taunang target na 20.19 milyong metriko tonelada.

Ang pagkalugi sa produksyon ng mais ay umaabot sa ₱107.95 milyon, na nakakaapekto sa 3,197 ektarya na may volume na pagkawala na 4,714 metriko tonelada, na kumakatawan sa 0.05 porsiyento ng taunang target na produksyon na 8.86 milyong metriko tonelada, sinabi ng departamento. *Santi Celario*

<https://remate.ph/halos-p7-b-halaga-winasak-nina-kristine-leon-sa-sektor-ng-agrikultura/>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Need for agricultural insurance cited

By **Jerry M. Hernandez**

November 9, 2024

THE Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) has cited the importance and need for insurance in the agriculture sector through the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA).

In a statement, PCIC Regional Office 3A officer in charge Gerlie Gregorio said insurance in agricultural activities affords farmers to avail of benefits during calamities or infestation that spoil their crops.

"Up to three hectares of farmland per household can be included in free insurance under the RSBSA with P20,000 maximum coverage per hectare," explained Gregorio.

She added that farmers must personally register applications for the insurance of their farmlands, preferably before planting period, either at the PCIC office or Municipal or City Agriculture Office.

"Farmers must submit an application within 30 days if they have already started planting," said Gregorio.

Other RSBSA benefits include support for palay (unmilled rice), corn, high-value crops, livestock and fisheries, as well as credit and life term insurance.

Eduardo Rivera, a farmer, said the insurance program they receive from PCIC provides substantial assistance in their sector.

"Kapag nasisiraan kami ng tanim ay kahit papaano, kahit na P7,000 lang sa isang ektarya, ay malaking bagay na po sa aming magsasaka (When our crops are spoiled or destroyed, even with P7,000 per hectare, is of big help to us)," he said.

From January to October this year, PCIC has distributed P49.6 million worth of indemnity checks to at least 4,000 farmers in Nueva Ecija, the country's "rice granary." PCIC also encouraged other farmers in neighboring provinces in Central Luzon to avail of the program through contact numbers 0943-5317865, 0945-6425194, and (044) 600-2880.

https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/11/09/regions/need-for-agricultural-insurance-cited/2000819?fbclid=IwY2xjawGePSRleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHVFl_C_kWkXjoyEkB1MT1YwjxoZ2UzMXwZELjugnBIBx6Wz1HarG_rorw_aem_qv6agk92sPormxMabCyXRg

BUSINESS MIRROR:

PHL, Australia strengthen trade ties with new coconut oil export partnership

BusinessMirror
November 9, 2024

Ares Merchants Philippines Inc. (AMPI), a key player in coconut oil exports and a consistent supplier to Australia is now setting a bold target to supply around 30,000 metric tons of high-quality coconut oil annually.

In a recent discussion with Luisa Rust, Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner from the Australian Embassy's Australian Trade & Investment Commission, AMPI's Managing Director, Jose Leonardo Tañada, outlined ongoing efforts to strengthen trade flows, including continued coconut oil exports to Australia and exploring new import opportunities from Australia to the Philippines.

Tañada emphasized AMPI's strategy of targeting premium markets like Australia, where pricing benefits can be passed along to Filipino coconut farmers. "Targeting affluent markets supports higher returns, directly benefiting local farms and helping to balance the trade deficit," Tañada noted. In Australia there is increasing demand for coconut oil in various industries such as food & beverages and cosmetics & personal care. The demand for coconut oil from Australian consumers is due to an appreciation of health benefits and taste preferences. The Australia food & beverages sector is increasing the demand for coconut oil for baking goods and dairy alternatives to enhance unique flavors. This demand underpinned by the growing Australia and Philippines two-way trade relationship will boost Philippine's coconut oil export revenues by an estimated \$70 million USD.

AMPI's strategy and support from Austrade aligns with the Philippine government's broader initiatives to enhance trade ties with Australia. The bilateral relationship between Australia and the Philippines is at a high point, with significant momentum over the past two years leading to the recent upgrade of the relationship to a Strategic Partnership. Last September 2023, Australian Prime Minister Albanese visited Manila and met with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to elevate the bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership. This month, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Cristina Roque engaged with Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Secretary Jan Adams to explore ways to strengthen economic relationships through trade, investment, and shared interests.

Additionally, by increasing coconut oil exports, AMPI's export growth aspirations also aligns with the DTI's drive to strengthen coconut exports and boost the Philippines' agricultural economy. As one of the largest global coconut producers, the Philippines has relied on coconut products as a cornerstone of its agricultural exports, contributing around 35% of the sector's

total share over the years. This growth strategy not only reinforces trade flows but also creates sustainable income sources for millions of Filipino farmers.

“By showcasing companies like AMPI, we demonstrate pathways for others to follow. Australian customers are seeking to source from reputable companies with high quality products, and an experienced export track record” Rust explained.

Rust further emphasized the economic benefits of importing coconut oil from the Philippines, noting that Australia’s coconut oil market has grown significantly. This growth is driven by increasing interest in coconut-based cuisine, rising demand for natural and organic products, and awareness of coconut oil’s health benefits, particularly its high concentration of medium-chain fatty acids. Additionally, coconut oil’s diverse applications in cosmetics and skincare products contribute to its expanding market presence in Australia.

Rust noted, “The Australia-Philippines relationship is a longstanding friendship built on mutual trust and cooperation. Australia and the Philippines have worked together to ensure a close partnership grounded in a commitment to peace, stability, and prosperity in our region. Our cooperation is deep and mature, covering defense, security and development, and growing trade and investment, all supported by strong people-to-people ties.”

In addition to showcasing companies like AMPI, Austrade has plans to enhance trade opportunities with the Philippines through various initiatives. These include providing advisory support for exporters, organizing trade missions between the two countries, and facilitating support for government agencies like the DTI with a marketing campaign in Australia.

For its part, AMPI is broadening opportunities for Philippine exports by marketing coconut oil to different industries, including food manufacturers and oleochemical applications, through its U.S. counterpart, Apical Resources America LLC. Recently, AMPI, the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), and Limketkai Manufacturing Corp. (LMC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to produce EU-compliant crude coconut oil free from MOSH and MOAH contaminants. This oil will be refined at the first Philippine-owned refinery in Europe. Under this agreement, the PCA will develop cooperatives and educate copra farmers through technology transfer, while LMC will provide logistical support. AMPI will procure a minimum of 4,000 metric tons of MOSH/MOAH-free copra monthly in Cagayan de Oro through the Limketkai Oil Mill and refine it at their European facility.

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https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/09/phl-australia-strengthen-trade-ties-with-new-coconut-oil-export-partnership/?fbclid=IwY2xjawGePRpleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHeia0zI_s9b3lkw-UDIjsrboLWoNPhS2e6twmY3Hf-cr_XKYs_KWahxGCA_aem_FPbi_gOE604bETDEbxAoTQ

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Rice tariff cuts fail to translate to lower prices, sparking calls for accountability

BusinessMirror Editorial
November 8, 2024

The sharp increase in rice inflation to 9.6 percent in October has sparked concerns that lower rice tariffs are not benefiting Filipino consumers as intended. Despite the government's decision to lower rice tariffs, the intended relief has not been fully realized, prompting the Department of Finance (DOF) to call for greater accountability from rice traders in passing on these benefits to the public. (Read the BusinessMirror story, "DOF to rice traders: Let people feel low tariffs," November 6, 2024).

The reduction in rice tariffs from 35 percent to 15 percent was intended to lower the cost of this essential commodity. However, the fact that rice inflation has still accelerated to alarming levels indicates that the policy change has not yet achieved its desired effect. This begs the question: Are there other underlying factors contributing to the high cost of rice?

It is imperative that the reductions in rice tariffs translate into tangible relief for all Filipinos, especially in light of the challenges posed by recent weather disturbances and the ongoing recovery efforts in affected communities. The DOF's reminder underscores the importance of ensuring that lower rice tariffs should lead to more affordable rice prices for consumers across the nation.

The average retail price of imported rice in the National Capital Region has shown a decline, offering a glimmer of hope amid the recent spikes in inflation. Moreover, the lifting of the export ban by India and the expected influx of cheaper imported rice into the country are positive developments that could further alleviate price pressures in the near future.

Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto's commitment to a comprehensive approach, encompassing intensive monitoring and mitigation of price fluctuations, is essential in maintaining inflation within the government's target range of 2 to 4 percent over the next two years. The government's swift response to the recent disasters, including the implementation of a price freeze on basic necessities and the allocation

of insurance claims to affected farmers, signifies a proactive stance in addressing the current challenges.

The Department of Agriculture's commitment to collaborating with industry leaders and performing thorough inspections to pinpoint the underlying reasons behind consistently elevated rice prices showcases a strong resolve to effectively address the prevailing challenges. The Price Act of 1993 provides a regulatory framework to safeguard consumers from price manipulation and ensure stability in the prices of essential goods, including rice.

To effectively address the current economic challenges, it would do well for the government to prioritize collaboration among diverse stakeholders, implement transparent pricing systems, and strictly enforce regulatory measures. By doing so, it can protect consumer interests and promote economic stability. It is vital that the reduced rice tariffs directly benefit our people, especially those most affected by price changes.

The rising cost of living, exacerbated by high food prices, is a significant challenge for many Filipinos. Ensuring the affordability of staple foods like rice should be a top priority for the government. By taking decisive action and collaborating with all stakeholders, the government can alleviate the burden on consumers and strengthen national food security.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/08/rice-tariff-cuts-fail-to-translate-to-lower-prices-sparking-calls-for-accountability/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Coral Reefs: An urgent call to action

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A man swims by a starfish off of Verde Island, Batangas province, Philippines on Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024. The Philippines is seeing one of the world's biggest buildouts of natural gas infrastructure. But the buildout raises serious questions about the health of nearby coral reefs and fishing communities. (AP Photo/Aaron Favila)

Being born and raised in the coastal regions of the Philippines, I had the privilege of experiencing the oceans of the Coral Triangle from an early age.

At the age of 10, I was introduced to scuba diving, which sparked a significant interest in marine biodiversity. Over the past seven years, my family and I have dived all over the Philippines. I have come to deeply appreciate coral reefs as a vital component of marine ecosystems. Diving fuels my passion for biology and reinforces my understanding that our efforts to preserve the ocean must involve recognizing humanity's reliance on and responsibility toward this magnificent ecosystem.

The ocean, covering over 70% of the Earth's surface, acts as the planet's life-support system, regulating climate, absorbing carbon dioxide, and generating more than half of the oxygen essential for life. Despite occupying less than 0.1% of the ocean floor, coral reefs play a

disproportionately large role in marine ecosystems and human livelihoods. However, due to human activities over the last decades, coral reefs face threats to their continued existence.

THE CORAL CRISIS: AN ECOSYSTEM IN DECLINE

Coral reefs are essential to the survival of approximately 25% of all marine species, supporting complex food webs and providing a basis for local tourism industries. Yet, it is estimated that nearly 50% of the world's coral reefs have already been lost or severely degraded. The primary threats include overfishing, pollution, unsustainable coastal development, and, more prominently, climate change.

Climate change is causing rising sea surface temperatures and ocean acidification, both of which are harmful to coral health. Coral bleaching, where corals expel their symbiotic algae due to thermal stress, has become increasingly severe. The 1998 global coral bleaching event, caused by a strong El Niño, resulted in the loss of approximately 16% of the world's coral reefs in just one year. According to climate models, 70-90% of coral reefs could disappear by mid-century if global temperatures continue to rise.

Additionally, ocean acidification—driven by approximately 30% of human-made carbon dioxide emissions—has caused a measurable decrease in seawater pH, from around 8.2 to 8.1 since the Industrial Revolution. While this change may seem marginal, it significantly affects the ability of corals and other marine organisms to form calcium carbonate skeletons, weakening the structural integrity of reef ecosystems. Projections suggest that ocean pH could drop an additional 0.3 to 0.4 units by 2100, further threatening coral existence.

CORAL RESTORATION: OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIELD

In response to these challenges, coral restoration is a significant intervention to mitigate reef degradation. During my field experience shadowing Dr. Peter Harrison's team in Zambales, I observed the complexities of coral restoration through sexual reproduction. This method combines the male and female gametes (eggs and sperm) of corals to achieve genetic diversity and produce new corals.

Coral spawning is a critical event in the life cycle of many coral species, offering an opportunity for genetic recombination, thereby increasing adaptive potential in changing environments. Dr. Harrison's team followed a method developed by Harrison to prepare for coral spawning. They inspected coral colonies over the days leading up to the event to gauge their readiness for gamete release. Cone-shaped nets with attached containers were placed over the corals to collect all coral gametes. These were then cultivated in controlled lab environments to maximize larval survival.

However, the restoration process is challenging. During my time in Zambales, a severe thunderstorm hit just as preparations were being made for coral spawning. The team had to abandon the site early to escape the storm, which disrupted the process and illustrated

the fragility of restoration efforts. Natural stressors like storms can destroy coral breeding grounds and prevent coral larvae from finding suitable locations to settle and grow, thus affecting reef formation and expansion.

ESTABLISHING A CORAL RESCUE BASE AT CORAL CLIFF, BOHOL

Inspired by the insight gained in Zambales, I am now involved in a coral restoration initiative at Coral Cliff in Calape, Bohol. In collaboration with H Resort, local NGOs, and government bodies, this project aims for coral restoration and community-based marine conservation. Coral reefs in this region are under significant pressure from climate change and local human activities, threatening biodiversity and the livelihoods of local fishing communities. The reefs at Coral Cliff, in particular, face the problem of earthquakes. Bohol, located along the Pacific Ring of Fire, is susceptible to seismic activity. Earthquakes can cause physical damage to coral reefs by shifting underwater structures and dislodging coral colonies. These compounded threats—both natural and human-made—makes the preservation of coral reefs here an urgent priority.

Dr. Harrison's team in Zambales focused on sexual reproduction to increase genetic diversity, the restoration efforts at Coral Cliff will primarily employ asexual fragmentation techniques. Asexual reproduction, while not enhancing genetic diversity, allows for the rapid propagation of coral fragments that are later transplanted onto degraded reef areas. This method enables large-scale restoration in a relatively short time, deeming it an effective immediate strategy for addressing coral loss.

The Coral Cliff initiative will also engage local volunteers, students, and environmental advocates in hands-on coral restoration activities. Participants will be trained in nursery maintenance, coral fragment cleaning, and reef monitoring. Involving the community is critical to the long-term success of the project, as it will foster a better sense of environmental responsibility.

THE IMPERATIVE FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

The rapid degradation of coral reefs worldwide is a stark reminder of the broader environmental crisis driven by human activity. They may become functionally extinct within the next few decades, leading to catastrophic consequences for marine ecosystems and the millions of people who rely on them for food, income, and coastal protection without intervention. Though despite this, studies show that coral reefs have remarkable recovery potential if the primary drivers of their degradation—climate change, overfishing, and pollution—are addressed.

The future of coral reefs requires a coordinated, global response that includes local community involvement, policy changes, and public awareness. Governments must enact stronger environmental regulations, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote

sustainable coastal development. Simultaneously, individuals and communities must engage in conservation initiatives by getting involved in restoration projects or adopting more sustainable lifestyle choices.

At Coral Cliff, our focus is on working with the local government to engage local communities in marine conservation while implementing practical restoration techniques. By empowering local communities to take responsibility for the health of their local ecosystems, restoration efforts like those at Coral Cliff offer a scalable solution to help preserve these ecosystems for future generations.

CONCLUSION

Coral reefs are among the most critical ecosystems on the planet, supporting marine biodiversity and human economies. Collectively, the integration of scientific research, community engagement, and targeted restoration efforts can slow the decline of coral reefs and promote recovery. The Coral Cliff restoration project in Bohol represents a small but significant step toward preserving these vital ecosystems. Future directions for coral restoration could involve further research in marine biology, ecology, and climate science research to develop innovative techniques for enhancing coral resilience. Additionally, marine projects such as mangrove restoration and seagrass conservation can complement coral health by improving overall coastal ecosystem robustness.

Ultimately, only through collective global action and the integration of diverse scientific disciplines can we preserve coral reefs for future generations.

“Collective global action” means nothing without the masses. In these moments, I encourage you to ask yourself: If not me, who? If not now, when? Bad things arise from good people doing nothing.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/08/coral-reefs-an-urgent-call-to-action/>