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MANILA BULLETIN:

PH halts bird, poultry imports from Netherlands over avian flu fears

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

Dec 12, 2024 08:35 PM



(MB FILE PHOTO)

A recent outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in the Netherlands has prompted the Department of Agriculture (DA) to reinstate a temporary ban on bird and poultry imports. In a statement on Thursday, Dec. 12, the agency said the move seeks to protect the Philippine poultry industry from the potential entry of the bird flu virus.

The DA's decision follows a report from the Netherlands' Ministry of Agriculture, Nature, and Food Quality regarding an H5 subtype avian influenza outbreak on November 17 in Putten, Gelderland.

The presence of the virus was verified by Wageningen Bioveterinary Research, a Dutch institute specializing in animal health, the agency said.

With this, DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. issued Memorandum Order (MO) No. 56, directing the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) to suspend the issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances for Dutch poultry products.

The agency said the ban includes poultry meat, day-old chicks, eggs, and artificial insemination materials.

The agriculture department said that it also mandates veterinary quarantine officers to confiscate affected imports, except for heat-treated products and shipments that were either in transit or arrived in the Philippines before the issuance of the directive.

For poultry products, only those processed on or before November 3 are exempt from the ban, the DA noted.

HPAI, or Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, is a serious type of bird flu caused by certain subtypes of the influenza A virus. It mainly impacts domestic and wild birds, known for its rapid spread and high mortality rates among poultry.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/12/12/ph-halts-bird-poultry-imports-from-netherlands>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA powerless to stop rice price spike? Quimbo doesn't buy it

BY [ELLSON QUISMORIO](#)

Dec 12, 2024 02:05 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Marikina City 2nd district Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo has debunked the Department of Agriculture's (DA) claim that the agency is powerless to stop the soaring prices of rice, which is the Filipino staple food.



Marikina City 2nd district Rep. Stella Quimbo (Ellson Quismorio/ MANILA BULLETIN)

Marikina City 2nd district Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo has debunked the Department of Agriculture's (DA) claim that the agency is powerless to stop the soaring prices of rice, which is the Filipino staple food.

Speaking during the hearing of the House quinta-committee (quinta-comm) on Wednesday, Dec. 11, Quimbo noted that the DA has significant powers under the Price Act, as well as the amended Rice Tariffication Law to address price manipulation, hoarding, profiteering and cartels in the rice industry.

“In other words, huwag niyo po sanang sasabihin na wala po kayong kapangyarihan na habulin ang mga taong nagsasabwatan at pinapataas ang presyo ng bigas dahil hindi po totoo ‘yan,” Quimbo told DA Undersecretary Asis Perez, who represented Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel during the latter part of the hearing.

Laurel, who was present earlier in the proceedings, claimed the DA lacked authority to address high rice prices and urged Congress to pass legislation that would grant the agency stronger powers against price manipulation, profiteering, and other exploitative practices in the agricultural sector.

Quimbo, however, pointed to Section 10 of the Price Act, which she said clearly empowers the DA as the implementing agency for rice. The law allows the department to conduct investigations, impose fines of up to P1 million, seize basic necessities and initiate prosecutions.

“Nakasulat po dito, kayo ay implementing agency and pwede kayong mag-conduct ng investigation, pwede po kayong magmula. ‘Yun po ang naka-indicate dito. Tama?’” Quimbo asked.

(It's written here, you are the implementing agency and you can conduct investigations, you can impose fines. That's what's indicated here. Correct?)

Perez replied, “If it’s in the law, then that’s it, Madam Chair.”

Like her fellow House members who took part the hearing of the so-called Murang Pagkain Supercommittee, Quimbo demanded for answers as to why rice remained costly despite an oversupply and recent tariff reductions under Executive Order (EO) No. 62, which slashed import duties from 35 percent to 15 percent.

She even cited data that showed the landed cost of rice decreased from P34.21 per kilogram in July to P33 in December.

Laurel asserted that the weaker peso offset the reduction--something that Quimo didn't agree with.

"The world price of rice dropped enough to offset the peso’s depreciation. The weakening of the peso is not a valid excuse," said the economist and senior vice-chairperson of the Committee on Appropriations.

Department of Finance (DOF) Director Jolly La Rosa supported Quimbo’s position, and said that the global drop in rice prices outweighed the peso’s depreciation.

Quimbo also reminded the DA of its authority under the amended Rice Tariffication Law (RTL). She said it allows the agency to declare a food security emergency and use P5 billion in funds to stabilize rice prices.

“You can use P5 billion to intervene in the market. Pwede kayong mag-import at gamitin ‘yan, ibenta ninyo katulad ng ginagawa niyo today, magbenta ng bigas at P42,” she explained.

(You can use that to import rice, then sell it for P42 a kilo like what you do today.)

She also stressed the DA’s ability to collaborate with other entities, such as the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC), under its existing memorandum of agreement.

“Please confirm that you also see it in the law. And in addition, you may deputize and enlist the assistance of any government official or agency in carrying out the provisions of this Act,” Quimbo said.

Quimbo urged the DA to exercise its full authority and hold traders accountable for unjustified price hikes.

“Huwag na huwag po natin sasabihin sa ating mga kababayan na kayo po ay powerless (Never tell our countrymen that you are powerless),” he reiterated.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/12/12/da-powerless-to-stop-rice-price-spike-quimbo-doesn-t-buy-it>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA: No control over lechon prices

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

December 13, 2024 | 12:00am



In an interview with The STAR, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said that what the DA can assure is the steady supply of pork.

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture has no jurisdiction over the selling price of roast pig or lechon following reports that the retail price had increased by 30 percent amid higher demand during the holidays, a ranking DA official said yesterday.

In an interview with The STAR, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said that what the DA can assure is the steady supply of pork.

“Lechon is already processed so it is no longer within our jurisdiction. It was already bought and cooked. It’s like ham, which is already under the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry),” De Mesa said.

De Mesa added that the DA only monitors the farmgate and retail prices of pork in the farms and the markets.

Based on monitoring of the DA, the retail price of pork shoulder ranged between P290 and P370 per kilo and pork belly, between P330 and P400 per kilo.

He said the demand for lechon and ham has increased amid the preparations for the holidays.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has said that the DA has no plan to implement a price cap on lechon, saying that roast pig is technically a luxury item.

Meanwhile, De Mesa gave assurance of enough supply of agricultural products despite successive typhoons in the last quarter.

“In terms of volume, we have no problem,” he said.

Based on DA’s monitoring, the retail price of whole chicken ranged between P175 and P240 per kilo; beef rump, between P410 and P490 per kilo; beef brisket, between P320 and P460 per kilo; medium-sized egg, between P6.50 and P8 per kilo.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/12/13/2407004/da-no-control-over-lechon-prices>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Palace: Budget to be reviewed, signed before Christmas

[Jose Rodel Clapano](#) - The Philippine Star

December 13, 2024 | 12:00am



President Marcos presides over the 2nd Joint National Peace and Order Council-Regional Peace and Order Councils meeting at Camp Crame yesterday. He directed officials not to engage in acts or take positions that could escalate tensions in the West Philippine Sea.

Noel Pabaleta

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos is slated to sign into law the P6.532-trillion national budget for 2025 before Christmas.

“Following standard practice, the Congress-approved national budget bill will be transmitted to the Office of the President for review. The national budget for 2025 will be signed before Christmas Day,” the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) said in a statement.

PCO Secretary Cesar Chavez previously said the signing of the spending bill has been tentatively set for Dec. 20.

Militant lawmakers, meanwhile, are questioning what they considered the hasty ratification of the bicameral conference committee report on the approved budget.

In a manifestation, Kabataan Rep. Raoul Manuel of the Makabayan bloc questioned specifically the huge increase – from P158.7 billion to P531.7 billion – in the “unprogrammed appropriations” of the bicam-approved budget program.

“Do all the items slashed from the programmed appropriations like in education go here (unprogrammed appropriations)?” Manuel asked.

Manuel said he is questioning the bicam conference report “because we have seen new changes, not for the better, but to bring the country away from true progress.”

He also questioned the decrease in the budget of the Department of Education (DepEd), while taking note of the increase in the P7 billion budget for state colleges and universities (SUCs).

ial Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Irrigation Authority (NIA).

PhilHealth’s zero subsidy

The Kabataan representative also cited the “big challenge” facing the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth), which would be receiving zero subsidy based on next year’s budget.

“While this zero budget for PhilHealth is a big challenge for this agency to live up in expectations to it, it is surprising why there is a cut in the budget of the DOH. So how can we expect to have better health care services if there is a P25.8 trillion peso budget cut in DOH as compared to the bicam version of NEP (National Expenditure Program) in our national budget?” Manuel said.

For Senate President Francis Escudero, the zero subsidy for PhilHealth under the approved budget program should serve as wakeup call for underperforming agencies.

“For such blunder, this should serve as a wakeup call to them, if not a slap in the face to make them do their job. It’s not right to reward them for their blunder by giving them money which they will not use anyway,” Escudero said.

He scored the health insurer for not having a single patient avail of zero balance billing despite its P600 billion allocation.

Bato ‘misinformed’

Meanwhile, Tingog party-list Rep. Jude Acidre said Sen. Ronald dela Rosa was “misinformed” about his criticism of its memorandum of agreement (MOA) with PhilHealth and the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP).

On Wednesday, Dela Rosa said he was wondering why PhilHealth and DBP would choose to partner with a party-list and not with the DOH in the development and rehabilitation of health facilities.

“It is worth asking why Senator Dela Rosa is so fixated on attacking this program, which is designed to uplift underserved communities. Could this be an attempt to deflect attention from the House investigation into extrajudicial killings during his time as police chief? His sudden concern for governance and ethics appears more like a smokescreen to distract from his own accountability issues than a genuine critique of the MOA,” Acidre said.

“Tingog Partylist’s participation in this initiative is rooted in its mission to improve access to health care, especially in underserved and rural communities. This initiative is not about power or control but about facilitating solutions for local government units (LGUs) to enhance public health care services,” Acidre explained.

He said the MOA outlines Tingog’s role in supporting LGUs by helping them access DBP’s financial mechanisms, and provide “fiscal training, capacity building and other initiatives to allow LGUs access to DBP’s credit facility, as well as “direct medical assistance” to patients.

Acidre said Tingog’s involvement is strictly facilitative and does not infringe on the mandates of government agencies.

“Tingog Partylist does not handle funds, manage projects, or encroach upon the functions of the Department of Health or the Department of the Interior and Local Government. These agencies remain central to national health care programs,” he stressed.

He rejected Dela Rosa’s criticisms, including claims that the initiative bypasses government agencies.

“The MOA does not bypass these agencies. Tingog complements, not replaces, their mandates,” Acidre clarified. “On accusations of politicization. Tingog’s involvement is grounded in service, not politics.

“The MOA adheres to all legal protocols. The financial arrangements are strictly between DBP and LGUs, and no funds are transferred to Tingog. The ethics of this partnership should be measured by its intent and outcomes, not by Dela Rosa’s baseless speculations,” he added.

He called on Dela Rosa to recognize the true purpose of the initiative.

“Instead of politicizing a well-intentioned initiative, Senator Dela Rosa should focus on addressing the lingering questions about his past and how it has affected the lives of countless Filipinos. Tingog, for its part, remains committed to serving the people, especially those in rural areas who have long been neglected,” Acidre said.

“We call on the public to see through this distraction and focus on what truly matters: ensuring that health care reaches every Filipino, regardless of political noise. Public service should always prioritize the welfare of the people, not personal or political agendas,” he concluded. – **Alexis Romero, Cecille Suerte Felipe**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/12/13/2407039/palace-budget-be-reviewed-signed-christmas>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

MPIC's agricultural unit keen on boosting Philippines milk production

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

December 13, 2024 | 12:00am



MPAV CEO Jovy Hernandez recently met with NDA administrator Marcus Antonius Andaya to explore potential partnerships aimed at strengthening the local dairy sector.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Metro Pacific Agro Ventures Inc. (MPAV), the agribusiness firm of tycoon Manuel V. Pangilinan, is keen on collaborating with the National Dairy Authority (NDA) in boosting the country's milk production and reducing dependence on imported sources.

MPAV CEO Jovy Hernandez recently met with NDA administrator Marcus Antonius Andaya to explore potential partnerships aimed at strengthening the local dairy sector.

“We are serious about working with the NDA to improve the state of our local dairy industry,” Hernandez was quoted as saying in a news release by the NDA yesterday.

“Our children and grandchildren deserve nutritious and fresh local milk and dairy products,” he added.

Hernandez noted that it is important to raise consumers' awareness about the nutritional benefits of milk to increase demand of the commodity.

MPAV is a wholly owned subsidiary of Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC) that has made significant investments in the dairy industry through its majority stake in The Laguna Creamery Inc., the company behind Carmen's Best and Holly's Milk.

Last August, MPAV acquired Universal Harvester Dairy Farms Inc. (UHFDI) in Bukidnon. The company is also constructing a state-of-the-art dairy facility in Bay, Laguna, in partnership with Israel's LR Group, designed to produce six million liters of milk annually.

"MPIC's entry into the dairy industry signals a positive shift. If a conglomerate of this scale is investing in dairy, it shows there's tremendous potential. With 99 percent of our milk still imported, there's a massive market opportunity," Andaya said.

"Collaboration is key. We welcome all forms of support, whether from the private sector, academia, or international partners, to help our dairy sector thrive," he added.

Hernandez echoed Andaya's statement, adding that the country's dependency on imports would be reduced if dairy industry players – from small to large-scale enterprises – would work together.

Andaya said the NDA plans to increase the country's milk sufficiency ratio to five percent by 2028 from the current level of 1.5 percent. Some of the agency's plan in achieving the target include expanding the national dairy herd, boosting milk yields, creating demand, raising public awareness and increasing farmers' incomes.

The NDA chief said they plan to grow the national dairy herd through stock farms, multiplier farms and nucleus farms. He explained that imported cattle would be acclimatized at stock farms before their offspring are distributed to multiplier farms and eventually to farmer beneficiaries.

The NDA is set to construct five stock farms across key locations: General Tinio in Nueva Ecija, Ubay in Bohol, Malaybalay in Bukidnon, Carmen in Cotabato and Prosperidad in Agusan del Sur.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/12/13/2406940/mpics-agricultural-unit-keen-boosting-philippines-milk-production>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

How retail prices of rice may be lowered immediately

By: [Ernesto M. Ordoñez](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:14 AM December 13, 2024

Rice retail prices can be lowered immediately if we follow the recommendation given by Representatives Nicanor Briones (Agap party list) and France Castro (ACT-Teachers party list). This is to use the suggested retail price (SRP) mechanism.

This proposal was given at a Dec. 11 hearing held by five committees at the House of Representatives “to address smuggling and price manipulation of basic goods and essential commodities.”

During this hearing, Laguna Rep. Loreto Amante wanted faster action, such as lower rice prices before Christmas. His wish can be fulfilled by using the SRP mechanism. But only if it is properly used in penalizing profiteering, as defined in the Price Act (Republic Act No. 7581).

The Price Act states: “Profiteering is the sale or offering for sale of any basic or prime commodity at a price grossly in excess of its true worth.”

Below is a table constructed with the help of Federation on Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor. It shows that rice profiteering is now happening on a large scale.

FROM RICE IMPORT TO RETAIL PRICE (P/ KILO)

| | SUGGESTED PRICE | CURRENT PRICE | DIFFERENCE |
|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------|
| IMPORT PRICE | P38 | P38 | 0 |
| IMPORTER / WHOLESALER MARGIN | 6 | 12 | 6 |
| RETAILER MARGIN | 5 | 6 | 1 |
| RETAIL PRICE | 49 | 56 | 7 |

SOURCE: BUREAU OF CUSTOMS, FFF

INO GRAPHICS

The import price used above is the average landed price of well-milled rice (5-percent broken), which most consumers purchase. The period covered is from last August to October. This assumes that the rice imported at that time is what is being sold today.

If the numbers above are verified by rice stakeholders in a complete supply chain, the SRP should be P49 a kilo. This is P7 lower than the current retail price of P56, indicating illegal profiteering.

But if we later use the current lower import price of P33 instead of the former P38 price, once the older stocks are sold, the SRP would then be P44 a kilo. Filipino consumers are currently getting an unfairly high price.

At the same time, because of the decreased 15-percent tariff, local farmers have suffered an 8-percent decrease in their incomes. At least P7 billion in foregone tariff revenue that they should have gotten has also been lost.

Proven steps. Two steps taken during the Ramos Administration that successfully decreased high rice prices must now be taken. The first step is to implement the Price Tag Law (or Consumer Act aka RA 7594—ed), which mandates that all products should display price tags.

Also, the Price Act states that illegal profiteering occurs “whenever a basic necessity or prime commodity being sold has no price tag.”

In implementing this law (Price Tag Act), all outlets that had no rice price tags were automatically closed. Since this was a violation of a law, business permits were suspended, until the price tags were displayed. Though usually for only one day, wide media coverage resulted in quick widespread price tag implementation. Consumers could now compare prices, and excessive prices immediately identified for profiteering charges.

The second step is for the Department of Agriculture (DA) to decide on the correct SRP. Today, there is no SRP for well-milled rice. The Department of Trade and Industry initiated this SRP practice during the Ramos administration.

All players in the supply chain are called to a meeting to discuss costs and reasonable margins. They include producers, importers, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers. With the guidance, an SRP is decided for the government to implement.

There was a time when the DA decided on an SRP without this consultation. The SRP was so low, that the supply vanished. Thankfully, this was soon corrected.

Not price control. Price control is usually counterproductive. This is because it sets a price level that all must follow, despite their differing circumstances. The SRP is instead used only as a guide to determine whether there is profiteering or not.

For example, if the retail outlet is far from the product source, a price higher than the SRP is allowed. But if the price unreasonably exceeds the SRP, the retail outlet is immediately penalized for profiteering.

The SRP has two advantages. First, it informs the consumer of the reasonable product price. Second, it warns the retailer of stiff penalties for profiteering. Consequently, the retailer thinks twice before he posts a profiteering price. Again, consequently, general price levels go down.

The SRP mechanism identified in the last Congressional hearing must be implemented immediately. If executed properly, Amante's wish for decreased rice prices before Christmas will certainly become a reality.

<https://business.inquirer.net/496180/how-retail-prices-of-rice-may-be-lowered-immediately>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

NDA, Metro Pacific set up multiplier farm

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:18 AM December 13, 2024

The National Dairy Authority (NDA) and Metro Pacific Agro Ventures Inc. (MPAV) are working together on two initiatives to strengthen the local milk industry.

The first undertaking involves the NDA linking MPAV—which is part of the conglomerate led by tycoon Manuel V. Pangilinan—to local producers for supply of fresh milk.

The second one entails the joint management of a multiplier farm that will produce and disperse dairy animal offspring.

Both parties have yet to flesh out the details for purchasing milk from local producers but the NDA said MPAV has been buying milk already from NDA-assisted cooperatives in Batangas and Quezon for the latter's The Laguna Creamery Inc. (TLCI).

MPAV, the agriculture business of Pangilinan-led Metro Pacific Investments Corp., acquired a 51-percent stake in the Magsaysay family's ice cream maker TLCI, known for the popular Carmen's Best brand, for about P200 million.

The multiplier farm that will be comanaged by the NDA and MPAV will primarily focus on breeding animals for distribution to farmers and produce milk.

“Metro Pacific is interested [in the] multiplier farm concept because it produces milk and it increases the herd,” the NDA said in a message.

NDA Administrator Marcus Antonius Andaya explained that imported cattle would be acclimatized at stock farms before their offspring are distributed to multiplier farms and eventually to farmer-beneficiaries.

The agency has five stock farms in its pipeline in the following key locations—General Tinio in Nueva Ecija, Ubay in Bohol, Malaybalay in Bukidnon, Carmen in Cotabato, and Prosperidad in Agusan del Sur.

<https://business.inquirer.net/496173/nda-metro-pacific-set-up-multiplier-farm>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

SRA to address concerns on ‘other sugar’ clearance

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 11:33 AM December 12, 2024



A woman stacks sugar at a store in Manila on January 18, 2023 —INQUIRER/ MARIANNE BERMUDEZ

The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) has vowed to address concerns raised by industry stakeholders about the proposed imposition of import clearance fees on “other” types of sugar.

SRA administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said the regulatory agency had drafted the order aimed at monitoring and gathering data on the volume of “other sugar” entering the archipelago. This is targeted to be released before the year ends. Other sugar alternatives refer to chemically pure lactose, maltose, glucose, and fructose, among others.

Azcona said the sugar board and Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. would meet with concerned industry players “to clarify the issues” surrounding the proposal.

He reiterated that the rationale for the order was not to regulate the importation of sugar alternatives.

“It’s usually manufacturers, food and beverage that have concerns. Initially, they thought... they’ve been using it for a long time, bakit ngayon lang iko-control (why control it now?) Yung sinasabi namin... (We said) we’re not here to control,” he said.

“We just need to explain to them the purpose and the very purpose of our order is to gather data actually. We came up with that order because we were made aware of the significant volume of other [sugar products] arriving in the country,” he told reporters.

Azcona also said other players had already asked if they could apply for import clearance and pay the fees.

The SRA estimated about 200,000 to 300,000 metric tons of “other sugar” products were coming to the country per year, based on informal information gathered. However, the SRA chief said they may not have accurate data as they were just relying on figures provided by relevant government agencies such as the Bureau of Customs.

It is difficult to craft any policy for the local industry without knowing the competitive landscape, he added. Once promulgated, the import clearance fee for sugar substitutes will be P10 per 50-kilogram bag. Such an amount is just “very minimal,” according to Azcona.

Some groups earlier flagged the influx of “other sugar” products that could result in the displacement of sugar farm workers, prompting the SRA to draft the order.

<https://business.inquirer.net/496094/sra-to-address-concerns-on-other-sugar-clearance>

BUSINESS WORLD:

H5N2 bird flu transmission pathways being investigated

December 12, 2024 | 8:46 pm



REUTERS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Thursday that it is investigating how Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Type A, Subtype H5N2 entered the country, after an outbreak at a Camarines Norte duck farm.

“Right now, the investigation of the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) is ongoing to determine how the H5N2 subtype entered, because this is the first time that this strain of HPAI reached our country,” Assistant Secretary and DA Spokesman Arnel V. de Mesa said at an online briefing.

On Wednesday, the BAI confirmed the first case of the subtype at a duck farm in Talisay, Camarines Norte. The ducks tested positive on Dec. 6.

“The most common subtype that hits us is H5N1, which is more virulent compared to H5N2,” he added.

According to a report by the World Health Organization, the Mexican government reported a fatal case of human infection with the H5N2 strain in May.

Mr. De Mesa said that the H5N2 strain is less likely to be transmitted to humans compared to the H5N1 subtype.

Bird flu infections in humans may cause mild to severe upper respiratory tract infections and can be fatal. Cases of conjunctivitis, gastrointestinal symptoms, encephalitis and encephalopathy have also been reported.

The BAI also said that it quarantined the affected farm, and had also culled and disposed of the infected birds.

The Camarines Norte outbreak makes it the second province with an active case of avian influenza, the other being Bulacan, according to a BAI report on Dec 6. Both outbreaks involved duck farms.

There is currently no approved vaccine for Avian Influenza in the Philippines. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/12/12/641329/h5n2-bird-flu-transmission-pathways-being-investigated/>

REMATE:

Bird, poultry ban ikinasa ng Pinas vs The Netherlands

December 12, 2024 17:55



MANILA, Philippines – Pansamantalang ipinagbawal ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang pag-import ng manok mula sa Netherlands dahil sa paglaganap ng bird flu.

Sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na ang hakbang ay naglalayong protektahan ang industriya ng manok sa bansa, isang pangunahing sektor para sa suplay ng pagkain at mga trabaho. Ang H5 bird flu outbreak ay nakumpirma noong Nobyembre 17 sa Putten, Gelderland, na nakakaapekto sa mga domestic bird.

“The import ban is intended to prevent the entry of the bird flu virus to protect the health of the local poultry industry,” ani Tiu Laurel.

Pinipigilan ng pagbabawal ang pag-import ng mga buhay na ibon, karne ng manok, itlog, at iba pang produkto, maliban sa mga nasa transit na o kinatay na bago ang Nobyembre 3, 2024. Exempted din ang mga produktong heat-treated.

Ang DA ay nag-utos ng mahigpit na inspeksyon sa lahat ng mga daungan upang matiyak na maipapatupad ang pagbabawal. Ang pagkilos na ito ay nakakatulong na maiwasan ang pagkalat ng virus sa Pilipinas. *RNT*

<https://remate.ph/bird-poultry-ban-ikinasa-ng-pinas-vs-the-netherlands/>

REMATE:

P40 bigas mabibili na sa 5 NCR public markets, LRT, MRT stations

December 12, 2024 16:04



MANILA – Nag-oopereyt na ngayon ang mga kiosk ng Kadiwa ng Pangulo (KNP) sa apat na istasyon ng tren sa Metro Manila, na nag-aalok ng well-milled rice sa halagang PHP40 kada kilo sa ilalim ng “Rice for All” program, inihayag ng Department of Agriculture (DA) noong Disyembre 11.

Ang mga kiosk ay matatagpuan sa mga istasyon ng MRT-3 North Avenue at Ayala, at mga istasyon ng LRT-2 Araneta Center-Cubao at Recto. Bukas mula Martes hanggang Sabado, 3 p.m. hanggang 8 p.m. (o hanggang sa maubos ang suplay), layunin nilang makapagbigay ng abot-kayang bigas sa commuters.

Bilang karagdagan sa mga istasyon ng tren, ang mga kiosk ng KNP ay nagpapatakbo sa limang pampublikong pamilihan sa Guadalupe Public Market, Kamuning Market, Malabon Central Market, New Las Piñas City Public Market at Pasay City Public. Ang mga kiosk sa mga pampublikong pamilihan ay bukas mula 8 a.m. hanggang 5 p.m.

Tinukoy ni DA Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa ang katanyagan ng programa, na may planong palawakin ang mga kiosk sa mas maraming lokasyon sa Metro Manila at higit pa sa 2025. Ang inisyatiba ay sinusuportahan ng PHP5 bilyon na badyet, na may PHP3 bilyong nakalaan para sa programang Rice for All.

Positibong tumugon ang mga mamimili, na ang mga supply ay madalas na nauubos nang mabilis. Ang mga pagsasaayos ay isinasagawa upang madagdagan ang pagkakaroon ng bigas.

Kasama rin sa programa ang mga planong magbenta ng tumatanda ngunit de-kalidad na stock ng bigas sa halagang PHP29 kada kilo para sa mga mahihirap na komunidad. *Santi Celario*

<https://remate.ph/p40-big-as-mabibili-na-sa-5-ncr-public-markets-lrt-mrt-stations/>

REMATE:

Regulatory powers ng NFA pinababalik ng DA chief vs mataas na presyo ng bigas

December 12, 2024 08:31



MANILA, Philippines – Nanawagan si Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel nitong Miyerkules, Disyembre 11 para ibalik ang regulatory powers ng National Food Authority (NFA) sa pagpapababa ng presyo ng bigas.

Ang tinutukoy ni Tiu Laurel ay ang kamakailang pagtapyas sa regulatory powers ng NFA dahil sa pagpasa ng Rice Tariffication law (RTL) noong 2019, na nagbabawal sa NFA sa pagbili, pagbebenta, at pag-aangkat ng bigas maging sa paglilimita ng mandato nito sa pangangasiwa ng buffer rice stocks.

Sa halip, pinapayagan ng RTL ang private entities na mag-import ng bigas nang walang limitasyon.

Ani Tiu Laurel, sa pagkakaroon ng authority ng NFA na mag-regulate, nabibigyan ito ng pagkakataon na magkaroon ng database sa rice traders, at masigurong makakapagitna ang NFA sa pag-import ng bigas kung kinakailangan.

“Well, number one, NFA dati lahat ng rice trader, kailangan naka register [sa NFA]. Ngayon, wala na eh. So kapag hindi sumunod sa usapan ang rice trader, dati, pwede tanggalan ng NFA ng license to operate,” anang Agriculture chief sa sidelines ng public hearing kaugnay sa pagpapababa ng presyo ng basic commodities, sa Kamara.

“Dati iyong NFA, iyong stock din ng bigas na binili locally, pwede niyang ibenta sa palengke. Ngayon, hindi. [Dati], pwede rin niyang ibenta sa LGU para maibenta ng mura [ng LGU sa mamimili]. Ngayon, hindi na rin pwede. Dati, pwede ‘yung NFA mag-import para i-address iyong kakulangan. Ngayon, hindi puwede. Kaya malaking bagay talaga na maibalik iyon,” dagdag ni Tiu Laurel.

Ngayong linggo ay pinirmahan ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang pag-amyenda sa Rice Tariffication law na bahagyang nagbabalik sa mandato ng NFA na nagbibigay-pagkakataon sa ahensya na magbenta ng rice buffer stock nito sa Kadiwa ng Pangulo rice centers.

Sa pagdinig, sinabi ni Tiu Laurel na may pangangailangan na ibalik ang kapangyarihan ng NFA para mapababa ang presyo ng bigas Kahit na mayroon nang 48 tindahan na nagbebenta ng bigas na P40 kada kilo.

Target ng DA na palawakin pa ito sa 300 tindahan pagsapit ng Enero.

“This [P40 per kilo rice] will be [available] in public markets, not private markets. We cannot enter private markets, by the way. We can only enter public markets. If we could, we are targeting to bring it down further to P38, P39 per kilo by January. That would be a significant coverage [of stores with affordable rice],” sagot ni Tiu Laurel nang tanungin ni House Deputy Majority Leader Erwin Tulfo ng ACT-CIS party-list kung saan pinapababa ng DA ang mga presyo ng bigas nito.

“We can lower the price further, but the problem is, we need Congress’ help to bring back the powers of NFA. As it is, NFA has no more power to produce more and make the farmers’ [source of livelihood] profitable. We don’t have the power to stabilize prices because the NFA only functions for buffer stocking.

“We cannot even sell our rice to the LGUs or to our own Kadiwa at a reasonable price. Because of this, at the moment and for the first time, we have almost six million bags of rice as buffer stock. If NFA had its previous powers, we could have sold it as low as P29, P30, P39 per kilo. But we can’t,” dagdag ni Tiu Laurel.

Suhestyon ni Tulfo, hilingin sa Pangulo na maglabas ang Executive Order para tugunan ang naturang mga isyu.

“We can’t wait for a law here. We might all be dead if we wait for such. Can we recommend to the President to issue an EO for you to release this six billion bags of rice? That would feed a lot of people,” sinabi ni Tulfo.

Bilang tugon, sinabi ni Tiu Laurel na ikokonsidera ng legal team ng DA ang rekomendasyon ni Tulfo. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/regulatory-powers-ng-nfa-pinababalik-ng-da-chief-vs-mataas-na-presyo-ng-bigas/>

MANILA STANDARD:

DA conducts fisheries information drive in Ilocos



By Manila Standard

December 12, 2024, 11:10 pm

ILOCOS NORTE—The Department of Agriculture – Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources concluded its last leg of FishCoRe Talakayan activity for 2024 in Laoag City on December 11 after its successful launch in Lubang, Occidental Mindoro, Anda, Bohol, and Jasaan, Misamis Oriental.

The FishCoRe Talakayan is one of the major activities of FishCoRe Project to raise the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of close to a hundred participants from different Fisherfolk Associations through open, comprehensive and engaging discussions with the help of partner Local Government Units and other stakeholders at the Grand Hall of Amici Resort Hotel.

BFAR Spokesperson and Chief of Information and Fisherfolk Coordinating Unit (IFCU) Nazario Briguera highlights the importance of sustainability, food security, and resiliency of ecosystems and communities among fisherfolks.

The FishCoRe Project is a seven-year collaborative project between DA-BFAR, the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI), the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA), and the World Bank with a total funding of \$209 million or P11.42 billion.

It is now in its second year of implementation to provide multiple fisheries interventions that would benefit over 1.15 million fisherfolks, small to medium enterprises, other fisheries stakeholders, and residents in coastal communities across 11 regions and 24 provinces in the country.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/314535464/da-conducts-fisheries-information-drive-in-ilocos.html>

MANILA STANDARD:

DA: We're powerless vs. rice profiteers; House leader: Not true



Rep. Stella Quimbo and Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel

By Manila Standard

December 13, 2024, 12:45 am

The Department of Agriculture said the regulatory powers of the National Food Authority must be restored to allow it to regulate rice traders and bring down prices of the staple grain.

“In the past, rice traders were required to register with us. Since the NFA does not have regulatory powers anymore, we cannot revoke their license to operate if they engage in unfair practices,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said.

Tiu Laurel said when the Rice Tariffication Law was passed in 2019, the NFA powers were limited to managing buffer rice stocks.

“Previously, the NFA was also allowed to import so we can intervene if there is shortage. That is no longer the case. So it would really be a big help if these mandates can be restored,” he added.

Marikina City Rep. Stella Quimbo, however, dismissed Tiu Laurel's claim that the DA is powerless to address soaring rice prices, noting clear legal provisions granting the agency enforcement authority.

She said the Agriculture department has significant powers under the Price Act and the amended Rice Tariffication Law to act against price manipulation, hoarding, profiteering and cartels in the rice industry.

"Do not tell that you do not have the power that you do not have the power to go after people conspiring and making the prices of rice go up because that is not true," she told DA Undersecretary Asis Perez during a hearing of the House "Murang Pagkain" Super Committee.

Quimbo cited Section 10 of the Price Act, saying the law clearly empowers the DA to conduct investigations, impose fines of up to P1 million, seize basic necessities, and initiate prosecutions.

The rice price issue came to the fore after NEDA Director Nieva Natural told the House panel on Tuesday that the President's Executive Order 62, which lowered the tariff on imported rice from 35 percent to 15 percent, did not lead to a reduction in prices as expected.

"This is also a puzzle for us... Perhaps this deserves a more nuanced analysis," Natural said.

Quimbo cited data showing that the landed cost of rice had decreased from P34.21 per kilogram in July to P33 in December given the reduced tariff, but this did not translate to lower retail prices.

Earlier, the Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement said traders were importing high-cost varieties instead of affordable rice.

PRISM co-founder Orlando Manuntag said from January to December 2024, at least 74 percent of the 4.3 million metric tons (MT) of imported rice that arrived were premium varieties, primarily whole grain, which are significantly more expensive.

Only a small fraction consisted of well-milled or broken rice—varieties intended to lower prices for consumers, he said.

Manuntag called on the government to enforce regulations requiring a mandatory allocation of at least 10 percent of imports for well-milled and broken rice.

The House super panel earlier asked the National Bureau of Investigation to probe the possible market manipulation that resulted in high rice prices despite the tariff cut.

Government data showed the tariff reductions have resulted in P13.3 billion in foregone revenues, which lawmakers suspect may have ended up benefiting rice importers and traders instead of lowering retail prices.

Albay Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda, lead chairperson of the super panel, also asked the Bureau of Internal Revenue to look into the filings and tax payments of top rice importers.

“Congress cannot request tax filings. They are protected by Section 270 of the Tax Code. But the BIR can verify their own assessments and records. These top importers are importing in the billions. So, their tax payments should reflect that,” Salceda said.

Manila Standard tried to get comment from major rice traders but none have replied as of press time.

Salceda said a charge of tax evasion would then allow the Anti Money Laundering Council to look into top importers’ transactions, “as tax evasion is a predicate offense that would allow AMLC to look deeper.”

“Around the time of the President’s rice price ceiling, the gap between landed import price and domestic retail price was just 3 pesos per kilo. Now it has swelled to 20 pesos per kilo, even as farmgate prices also went down.”

“This is just short of being supernatural. There is clearly pricing abuse— we just need to pinpoint at which stage,” Salceda said.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/top-stories/314535525/da-were-powerless-vs-rice-profiteers-house-leader-not-true.html>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Quality of public spending

By **Fermin D. Adriano**

December 13, 2024

IN the past, we agriculture academics and analysts complained about the relatively low funding devoted to the sector's development under the national government budget.

The budget for agriculture has hovered below 2 percent of the yearly General Appropriations Act (GAA). In contrast, neighboring Asian countries have provided budgets of 4 percent or more of their yearly appropriations. We argued then that this was one of the reasons why we could not foster sustained agricultural growth.

This no longer holds true today. When President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. concurrently served as head of the Department of Agriculture (DA), he made sure of higher budget allocations in 2023 and 2024. This was in recognition of the critical role of agriculture in promoting balanced and higher economic growth, as the sector's lackluster performance was acting as a deadweight.

In 2023 and 2024, the budgets allotted for the DA were more than 3 percent of overall yearly government appropriations. The DA's budget practically doubled from around P140 billion in 2022 to more than P200 billion in 2023 and 2024. Note that the budget covers all agencies, bureaus and attached agencies under the department.

Interestingly for the rice program, the budget jumped from around P60 billion to more than P100 billion. This included funding support for the National Rice Program (NRP) plus those from the Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund (RCEF), National Irrigation Administration (NIA), Philippine Rice Research Institute, Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) and Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), etc.

Though they are supposed to provide across-the-board support to various agricultural commodities, the bulk of these agencies' services go to supporting rice-related production programs. More than 85 percent of the irrigation water supplied by the NIA supports rice farms, around 80 percent of PCIC's insurance covers rice farmers and the small water impounding system of BSWM mostly supports rice farming.

As it stands now, more than P100 billion, or about 60 percent of the DA's annual budget, supports rice-productivity enhancement programs. In fact, the NRP has a whopping budget of P30.8 billion, which is bigger than other government agencies, this year on top of the guaranteed P10 billion from the RCEF.

Moreover, beyond the P10 billion earmarked for RCEF from rice tariffs, excess funds collected from rice import duties of around P15 billion are also used to support rice farmers. In addition, the

newly signed amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law raise the RCEF budget to P30 billion a year for the next six years.

Given the huge budget dedicated to rice, being a political commodity since it is the staple food of Filipinos, what do we get in return from this massive yearly investment?

Not much. Local production can only meet 13 million metric tons (MT) of our yearly rice consumption demand of 16 million MT. Productivity gains are practically insignificant and this year, a decline in the palay harvest of around a million MT is expected. This will trigger record-high rice imports of nearly 5 million MT, a staggering volume that will earn the Philippines the unenviable tag of being the largest rice importer in the world. And yet rice prices remain sticky high.

What happened to all the money poured into rice? A good analogy for an answer is the status of our flood control projects. We spend a billion pesos a day for flood control projects that are non-existent or of very poor quality that are easily destroyed whenever a destructive typhoon hits the country.

Similarly, the government has not seriously monitored and evaluated whether the array of subsidies given to eligible farmers has raised farm productivity or whether the seeds, fertilizers, machineries, etc. distributed to cultivators are of the right quality and appropriate to the needs of beneficiary communities.

Just like flood control projects, rice farmers experience inadequate and delayed funding to cover the costs of operating and maintaining machinery, postharvest facilities, dryers, etc. There is no proper determination as to whether geographical areas are the right places to extend the assistance due to the existence of strong farmer cooperatives and associations that can operate and maintain facilities.

The measure of success is based on the number of seeds, fertilizers or machinery distributed. There is no measurement of the ultimate goal of the assistance, which is raising the productivity of cultivators — resulting in higher income and improved socioeconomic welfare.

We are witnessing the same in the law that amended the Rice Tariffication Law, extending the RCEF for another six years with bigger funding. The same components (i.e., in-bred seeds, farm machinery, credit and training) were retained with additional dole-out components. Lessons gained from the implementation of the original RCEF were not used to improve the design of the amended RCEF.

It is all about the distribution of dole-outs without regard to the different needs of rice-growing areas. It is all about distributing subsidies through favored politicians in order to gain the political support of voters.

Obviously, the needs of areas favorable to rice production (with a good irrigation system) will differ from unfavorable areas (without reliable irrigation). Expectedly, higher productivity is obtained in the former but is lower in the latter.

Should unfavorable areas still be planted to palay during the dry season when these would be more suitable for the production of high-value crops if small water (pump or impounding) systems are present? Will the government fund such rice-based crop diversification given that the budget is only dedicated to the promotion of rice production?

An agricultural scientist friend who specializes in rice breeding told me that he has never seen a Filipino rice farmer improve his economic lot by planting rice alone because the land he tills is too small, averaging less than 2 hectares. He noted that income improvement can only be attained if the farmer plants high-value crops between the two palay planting seasons or during the dry season.

Unfortunately, such a change might not be forthcoming because the current system is oriented toward attaining rice self-sufficiency when the reality shows that this has become an unrealistic economic goal.

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<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/13/business/top-business/quality-of-public-spending/2021002>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Iligan farmers secure abaca fiber processor

By Giselle P. Jordan

December 13, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture-Philippine Rural Development Project 10 (DA-PDRP 10) handed over P9.1 million worth of abaca fiber processing and marketing enterprise to the Cadayunan Tribal Farmers Association (Catrifa) through its enterprise component, I-REAP.

The enterprise includes a delivery truck worth P2.09 million, a hauling tractor with trailer priced at P1.94 million, a balling machine worth P1.3 million, decortication machines valued at P600,000, a P140,000 weighing scale, and P2.2 million worth of raw materials.

Jose Apollo Pacamalan, DA-10 regional executive director and DA-PDRP 10 project director, said he is optimistic that the initiative would greatly benefit the Catrifa members who consistently see a great demand for abaca fiber.

"We believe this intervention is necessary for the proponent group because the demand and buying price of abaca is still high to this day. I hope that through this intervention, your cooperative will continue to be operational and prosperous," said Pacamalan.

Catrifa President Marlyn Cubaynon thanked the DA-PRDP and the city government of Iligan for their assistance to the abaca farming community. She also said that the aid was very timely as it will increase their capacity to meet the high market demands.

"Currently, we can only deliver a small volume of abaca fiber, but with this support, we can significantly increase our market deliveries and benefit from the high buying price," she added.

The abaca fiber processing and marketing enterprise is funded by the Second Additional Financing of the EU Co-financing Grant (AF2-EU) through the DA-PDRP.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/13/regions/iligan-farmers-secure-abaca-fiber-processor/2021009>

THE MANILA TIMES:

ZECC technology to save more crops

By Leander C. Domingo

December 13, 2024

LAGAWE, Ifugao — No more rotting of vegetables and fruits in this province with the introduction of the Zero Energy Cooling Chamber (ZECC), a technology introduced by the Department of Agriculture Regional Field Office 2 (DA-RFO2) Cagayan Valley Research Center.

Steve Baccay, supervising agriculturist and head of the Provincial Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Office, said this technology "offers a sustainable and cost-effective solution for preserving fruits and vegetables without relying on electricity or external energy sources."

"We deeply appreciate the DA-RFO2 Cagayan Valley Research Center for bringing this transformative technology to our province," said Baccay, adding that the ZECC enhances the shelf-life of fresh produce, aligning perfectly with our commitment to sustainable agricultural practices.

He said the ZECC is an innovative technology that reduces post-harvest losses by preserving fruits and vegetables in their freshest state, thus "providing farmers with the opportunity and increase their earnings."

Baccay said that this initiative marks a significant step forward in strengthening Ifugao's agricultural sector.

"It bridges the gap between farmers, processors, and markets, fostering economic growth and improving livelihoods. We are confident that this technology will be key in transforming agriculture in Ifugao and beyond," he said.

Baccay noted that by adopting ZECC, the province of Ifugao reinforces its dedication to environmental sustainability and food security.

"This technology will help us minimize food wastage and reduce dependency on energy-consuming storage methods, ensuring a more resilient agricultural sector," he said.

Due to the ZECC's affordability and ease of use, Baccay said farmers across the province are expected to benefit from this technology, which will further boost their productivity and foster stronger connections between local farmers and markets.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/13/regions/zecc-technology-to-save-more-crops/2021008>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Restore NFA's power to sell rice – Tiu Laurel

December 13, 2024

AGRICULTURE Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. on Wednesday urged lawmakers to return the power of the National Food Authority (NFA) to directly intervene in the market to help stabilize rice prices.

At the House of Representatives' "Murang Pagkain" super committee hearing, Tiu Laurel said restoring NFA's privilege to sell rice directly to the public at low prices would protect consumers more effectively.

The privilege was removed following the approval of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) in 2019. Previously, the NFA had the authority to issue licenses to rice traders and account for rice supply in warehouses. The RTL limited the NFA's role to sourcing palay (unmilled rice) from local farmers for buffer stocks.



Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. PHOTO FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The Department of Agriculture wants amendments to the RTL, including restoring NFA's powers, but these requests have yet to be approved.

"I believe if we want to control the situation, it is better to restore all the powers of the NFA. It just has to be managed by honest people," Tiu Laurel said, proposing it as a long-term solution to the problem of rice stocks and prices.

The reason traders have been successful in manipulating rice prices was the clipping of the NFA's power to regulate the prices. The NFA, he pointed out, has a buffer stock of almost 6 million bags of rice that could be sold to the public to lower the price of rice.

Iloilo 1st District Rep. Janette Garin asked the National Bureau of Investigation to probe the rice supply chain and check if there is market price manipulation, like what happened to onion prices a few years ago.

Tiu Laurel said NFA's average palay buying price this year is P27.45 per kilo (kg), which translates to roughly a P49 retail price for local well-milled rice.

On the other hand, imported rice sells for P42 kg.

Some 13 million metric tons (MT), or 78 percent of the country's rice supply, comes from local production. The country imports an annual total of 4.5 to 4.7 million MT of rice, including a buffer stock of 10 percent.

Nonetheless, Tiu Laurel lauded President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. for reducing the rice tariff to 15 percent from 35 percent in July 2024, which kept rice prices manageable, even as rice imports this year increased compared to previous years.

Albay 2nd District Rep. Joey Salceda, chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means, said: "Because rice demand is virtually inelastic — meaning, consumption doesn't change despite price fluctuations — the absence of a regulator has led to welfare losses of P136 billion."

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/13/business/top-business/restore-nfas-power-to-sell-rice-tiu-laurel/2021039>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA: New bird flu strain unlikely to affect egg and chicken prices

Ada Pelonia

December 13, 2024

The new strain of bird flu detected in the country would not cause a spike in egg and chicken prices, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

This, after the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) announced on Wednesday the first detection of the H5N2 strain of avian influenza in the Philippines.

The agency attached to the DA said the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) type A subtype H5N2 was found in a duck farm in Talisay, Camarines Norte.

“It will not have an impact [on] prices,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa told reporters on Thursday, noting that it would also not prompt a decline in consumption.

“We do not expect [chicken or egg consumption to decline] because again, this is not the first time we have had a case of highly pathogenic avian influenza in the country,” he said.

De Mesa explained that the H5N1 strain is more “virulent” and contagious compared to the H5N2 strain, adding that it is also “less likely” to be transmitted to humans.

“If you look at our cases, our bird flu incidences are easily controlled. Once it is controlled, a declaration of bird flu-free status is also made for the area,” he said in Filipino.

The DA official noted that the BAI is conducting an ongoing investigation to determine how the strain arrived in the country.

“The investigation by the Bureau of Animal Industry is ongoing to determine how H5N2 arrived since this is the first time this strain of HPAI has reached our country,” De Mesa said, adding that culling operations on infected animals in the area have already been conducted.

The DA official reminded the public to purchase meat from reliable vendors and scan for the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) stamp.

“When cooking, whether it’s pork or chicken, always cook it well. Most of these viruses die when subjected to heat [...] if buying meat, look for the NMIS inspection mark,” he said.

Meanwhile, the United Broiler Raisers Association (Ubra) said chicken consumption and liveweight prices would not decline due to the newly detected strain.

“There has only been one case of AI on broilers based on BAI records,” Ubra Chairman Elias Jose Inciong told the BusinessMirror on Thursday.

“It is a duck farm. Ducks are known to be vulnerable,” Inciong said.

The BAI said that all disease control measures are being coordinated closely with the agency.

“Rest assured that BAI is committed to protecting Philippines’ poultry industry from the threat of avian influenza and will maintain close cooperation with other government agencies and stakeholders,” it said.

“We encourage the public to remain vigilant and report any unusual poultry deaths or signs of illness to local authorities for immediate action.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/13/da-new-bird-flu-strain-unlikely-to-affect-egg-and-chicken-prices/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Lawmaker urges renationalization of agriculture and fisheries services

Ada Pelonia
December 13, 2024

A lawmaker backed the call to renationalize agriculture and fishery services following the devolution of certain powers to the local government.

Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Raymund “LRay” Villafuerte said reverting full control and supervision over agricultural programs, facilities, and personnel from local government units (LGUs) to the Department of Agriculture (DA) would bolster the farm sector.

He also agreed with Senate President Francis Escudero and Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. who earlier said that returning control of such services to the national government would boost farm output because the recurring productivity concerns in the sector were largely due to the devolution.

“This is the only way to decisively address what has been seen as the disconnect between the national government, through the DA and its attached agencies, and the LGUs in the implementation of agricultural and fishery programs and projects that is believed largely responsible for the perennially anemic farm productivity,” Villafuerte said in a statement.

“It is a good thing that SP Chiz, Sec Kiko, and I are on the same page here with Local Government Secretary [Juanito Victor Remulla] who, in being a long-time governor like me prior to his Cabinet posting, supports a revisit of the 1991 LGC with an eye to tweaking its provisions on the devolution of certain functions from the central government to LGUs,” he added.

The Local Government Code of 1991 devolved agriculture and fishery, health, education, and other services to LGUs, following the 1987 Constitution’s policy on genuine local autonomy and decentralization.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/13/lawmaker-urges-renationalization-of-agriculture-and-fisheries-services/>

ABANTE TONITE:

DA dinikdik ng Kamara sa taas-presyo: Werpa vs rice cartel pinamukha sa Agri chief

December 12, 2024



Kinontra ni Marikina City Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo ang sinabi ni Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na walang kapangyarihan ang Department of Agriculture (DA) upang matugunan ang pagtaas ng presyo ng bigas.

Sa pagdinig ng Quinta Committee ng Kamara de Representantes noong Miyerkoles, Disyembre 11, hiniling ni Laurel sa Kongreso na magpasa ng batas upang malabanan ng DA ang manipulasyon ng presyo, profiteering, at iba pang pamamaraan para tumaas ang presyo ng mga produktong agrikultural.

Iginiit naman ni Quimbo na may kapangyarihan ang DA sa ilalim ng Price Act at inamiyendahang Rice Tariffication Law upang labanan ang price manipulation, hoarding, profiteering, at kartel sa industriya ng bigas.

“In other words, huwag niyo po sanang sasabihin na wala po kayong kapangyarihan na habulin ang mga taong nagsasabwatan at pinapataas ang presyo ng bigas dahil hindi po totoo ‘yan,” sabi ni Quimbo kay DA Undersecretary Asis Perez, na kumatawan kay Laurel ng umalis ito.

Ayon kay Quimbo, sa ilalim ng Price Act, maaaring mag-imbetiga ang DA at magpataw ng multa na hanggang P1 milyon gayundin ang pagkumpiska sa mga ilegal na produkto at isulong ang pagpapataw ng parusa sa mga sangkot dito.

“Nakasulat po dito, kayo ay implementing agency and puwede kayong mag-conduct ng investigation, puwede po kayong magmula. ‘Yun po ang naka-indicate dito. Tama?’” sabi ni Quimbo.

Sagot naman ni Perez, “If it’s in the law, then that’s it, Madam Chair.”

Kinuwestiyon ni Quimbo kung bakit nananatiling mataas ang presyo ng bigas kahit na ibinaba na ang taripa sa 15% mula sa 35%.

Ang landed cost ng imported na bigas ay bumaba rin umano na mula P34.21 kada kilo noong Hulyo ay naging P33 na lang ngayong buwan.

Ibinasura rin ni Quimbo ang sinabi ni Laurel na nagpataas sa presyo ng lokal na bigas ang mahinang piso kontra dolyar.

“The world price of rice dropped enough to offset the peso’s depreciation. The weakening of the peso is not a valid excuse,” ani Quimbo.

Sumang-ayon naman kay Quimbo si Department of Finance (DOF) Director Jolly La Rosa.

Sinabi ni Quimbo na sa ilalim ng inamiyendahang Rice Tariffication Law

Mayroong P5 bilyong pondo na magagamit ang DA upang patatagin ang presyo ng bigas sa mga pamilyan.

“You can use P5 billion to intervene in the market. Puwede kayong mag-import at gamitin ‘yan, ibenta ninyo katulad ng ginagawa niyo today, magbenta ng bigas at P42,” giit ng lady solon.

Hiniling ni Quimbo sa DA na gamitin ang kapangyarihan nito katuwang ang mga ahensiya ng gobyerno upang mapanagot ang nasa likod ng hindi makatwirang pagtataas ng presyo ng bigas.

“Huwag na huwag po natin sasabihin sa ating mga kababayan na kayo po ay powerless,” sabi pa ni Quimbo.

Nilikha ang Quinta Committee sa ilalim ng House Resolution No. 2036 na akda nina Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez at Senior Deputy Speaker Aurelio Gonzales. Nakapaloob dito ang House Committees on Ways and Means, Trade and Industry, Agriculture and Food, Social Services, at Special Committee on Food Security. (Billy Begas)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/12/12/da-dinikdik-ng-kamara-sa-taas-presyo-werpa-vs-rice-cartel-pinamukha-sa-agri-chief/>