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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# ‘Concerning’ lahar buildup around Kanlaon Volcano prompts renewed calls for evacuation

**BY MARTIN SADONGDONG**

Dec 15, 2024 12:36 PM



A view of Kanlaon Volcano during an aerial assessment of the Philippine Air Force (PAF) over Negros Occidental on Dec. 12, 2024. (Photo: PAF)

The Office of Civil Defense (OCD) reiterated its appeal to residents living near Kanlaon Volcano to evacuate as soon as possible due to a “concerning” buildup of lahar.

According to OCD spokesperson Director Edgar Posadas, many residents in Western Visayas (Region 6) and Eastern Visayas (Region 7) – including indigenous peoples (IPs) in Canlaon City, Negros Oriental – continue to refuse to leave their homes despite the implementation of a mandatory evacuation order by the local government unit (LGU).

“The Regional Task Force (RTF) Kanlaon has reported a concerning three million cubic meters of lahar buildup, prompting a need for immediate action,” he said in a statement Sunday, Dec. 15.

Isolated rainshowers have been affecting the Visayas due to the effects of the shearline and northeast monsoon (amihan). When the rainwater mixes with volcanic materials such as ash and rocks, it forms lahar, a fast-moving volcanic mudflow or debris flow.

The number of affected population in Regions 6 and 7 increased to 14,943 families or 65,850 individuals. Of this, there were 4,691 families or 15,665 individuals that were staying in 28 evacuation centers.

The OCD said that the LGU of Canlaon City is evaluating priorities and addressing challenges related to the management of evacuated individuals, as funds remain insufficient to adequately support the displaced population.

“The Canlaon City Mayor (Jose Chubasco B. Cardenas) is scheduled to meet with the tribal chief to facilitate the evacuation of IPs in Barangays Masulog and Pula, aiming for completion by December 16,” Posadas said.

The OCD said that all actionable items, including evacuation plans and identification of locations for border controls, have been successfully implemented.

A “return window” for evacuees is set from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m., with a requirement to fill out waiver forms prior to entry. Evacuees are advised to use designated routes in case of a sudden eruption, the OCD noted.

However, RTF Kanlaon commander and OCD-6 director Raul Fernandez said they are currently facing “challenges” in sustaining assistance for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) affected by the volcanic eruption.

The OCD disclosed last Thursday that funds allotted by the LGUs to support the needs of evacuees were slowly depleting, stressing it could only last for about three to four days.

Additional fund worth P30 million has been requested to address the issue while the OCD allocated P1 million for fuel to support ongoing operations related to Kanlaon’s eruption.

“The RTF will discuss with the DILG [Department of the Interior and Local Government] strategies for managing funds and developing a plan in the event that the request for an additional P30 million is not approved,” Posadas said.

Meanwhile, Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary and National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) Chairman Gilberto Teodoro Jr. coordinated with Mayor Henry Tumlos of Pontevedra, Negros Occidental to identify suitable flat areas for tent setup, where the evacuating LGU shall oversee the management of a tent city.

“Family tents, generously donated by OCD VIII, have been established in La Carlota. Additionally, the Philippine National Police (PNP) has implemented border control measures around danger zones, and coordination with the La Carlota LGU has allowed the use of a local gymnasium for stockpiling supplies,” Posadas said.

Further, the municipalities of Pavia and Janiuay in Iloilo have provided water filtration systems to ensure the evacuees’ access to potable water.

In terms of recovery and rehabilitation, the RTF-Kanlaon also urged concerned LGUs to provide updates on animal evacuation efforts as the Department of Agriculture (DA) is prepared to offer animal dispersal plans and services.

According to OCD, Mayor Alme Rhummyla G. Nicor-Mangilimutan of La Castellana, Negros Occidental has requested uniformed personnel to manage three identified livestock evacuation areas in their town.

[https://mb.com.ph/2024/12/15/concerning-lahar-buildup-around-kanlaon#google\\_vignette](https://mb.com.ph/2024/12/15/concerning-lahar-buildup-around-kanlaon#google_vignette)

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# ‘Expanded rice-for-all timely for Christmas’

**Jose Rodel Clapano** - The Philippine Star

December 15, 2024 | 12:00am



Rice priced at P40 per kilo under the program is now available at Maypajo Public Market in Caloocan City, Murphy Market and Cloverleaf Balintawak in Quezon City, La Huerta Market in Parañaque City and Trabajo Market in Sampaloc, Manila, according to the Department of Agriculture.

Michael Varcas / File

MANILA, Philippines — Expanding the Rice-for-All program to make rice cheaper is “timely for Christmas,” Navotas Rep. Toby Tiangco said yesterday.

Rice priced at P40 per kilo under the program is now available at Maypajo Public Market in Caloocan City, Murphy Market and Cloverleaf Balintawak in Quezon City, La Huerta Market in Parañaque City and Trabajo Market in Sampaloc, Manila, according to the Department of Agriculture.

The program is also accessible at the Recto station on Light Rail Transit Line 2 and Ayala, North Avenue and Cubao stations on Metro Rail Transit Line 3.

“The President’s marching orders have always been clear – we must take every step possible to keep prices down and help Filipinos deal with inflation. These additional areas offering lower prices in rice prove that President Marcos is serious in his commitment to our countrymen,” Tiangco said.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/12/15/2407488/expanded-rice-all-timely-christmas>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Seized mackerel is 1st case under Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act

[Helen Flores](#) - The Philippine Star

December 15, 2024 | 12:00am



Photo from the Bureau of Customs shows President Marcos inspecting the P178.5 million worth of frozen mackerel seized in October during a turnover ceremony at the MICP yesterday. Joining the President are Interior Secretary Jonvic Remulla, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel and BOC chief Bienvenido Rubio. Marcos later led the distribution of the seized fish to poor residents in Baseco in Manila (inset).

Noel Pabalate

MANILA, Philippines — The government will have its first case of agricultural economic sabotage under Republic Act 12022 or the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act against smugglers of P178.5 million worth of frozen mackerel seized by the Bureau of Customs (BOC) in October, President Marcos said yesterday.

Marcos made the declaration as he inspected 21 container vans of the confiscated shipment at the Port Area in Manila, and later led the donation of the goods to poor residents in Tondo.

“As I said, this is the first case under the new law of the Anti-Agricultural Sabotage Act. So, I’ve spoken to our Bureau of Customs and I’ve spoken to the Department of Agriculture and we have to keep going. We have to intensify it,” Marcos told reporters following the inspection. No other information, like the names of the importer or consignee, was given.

Signed by Marcos last Sept. 26, RA 12022 seeks to protect farmers, fisherfolk and consumers by defining and penalizing crimes related to agricultural economic sabotage like smuggling, hoarding, profiteering and cartel activities.

In signing the measure, Marcos cited the “staggering” loss of more than P3 billion to agricultural smuggling in 2023 alone.

RA 12022 repealed RA 10845 or the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016. Marcos had noted that smuggling, hoarding, profiteering and cartel operations involving agricultural and fishery products would be classified as economic sabotage – a non-bailable offense punishable by life imprisonment and fines of up to five times the value of the goods involved.

Under RA 12022, the Court of Tax Appeals shall have exclusive jurisdiction over cases related to agricultural economic sabotage and shall have the authority to handle and decide on criminal proceedings.

The frozen mackerel shipments, which came from China, were seized on Sept. 28 and 29 at the Manila International Container Port (MICP).

The shipment was intercepted by the BOC’s Intelligence and the MICP, in coordination with the DA’s Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), for lack of sanitary and phytosanitary clearances.

Officials said the consignee, which the BOC refused to name, is being investigated for possible violation of DA Memorandum Order No. 14, s. 2024 on the issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances for the importation of round scad, mackerel and bonito.

In November, BFAR declared the frozen mackerel safe for human consumption.

Upon the recommendation of the BOC, the Department of Finance approved the donation to the DA early this month.

Marcos distributed the confiscated fish to poor residents in Metro Manila on Saturday even as he issued a stern warning against smugglers disrupting the supply chain.

“Our Christmas present is different, instead of ham and lechon we brought fish, mackerel. So these won’t just be wasted,” the President said during the distribution of confiscated mackerel in Baseco Port Area in Tondo.

Twenty-one households in Barangay 649 in Baseco received the donated goods through the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). Each household received two kilos of mackerel.

Marcos said BFAR conducted laboratory tests, assuring that the frozen mackerel are safe for human consumption.

“Expect that when we have an incident like this, the first thing we think about is how to use these confiscated goods. Sometimes it’s not just food, there are agricultural products,” the President said.

Present at the event were Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jonvic Remulla, Manila Mayor Honey Lacuna and other officials.

The frozen mackerel will also be distributed to the poorest barangays in other areas in Metro Manila, as well as in Obando and Meycauayan in Bulacan and Bacoor in Cavite.

Select city jails, public hospitals and various care facilities also likewise received the confiscated goods. An estimated 150,000 families will benefit from the donation.

From July 2022 to November this year, the BOC has seized P5.87 billion worth of smuggled agricultural products as part of government efforts to address agricultural sabotage, the Presidential Communications Office said.

Meanwhile, the DA said it is firm on implementing a five-month long closed-fishing season – from November to March – in a bid to ensure sustainable fish production in the country.

Tiu Laurel defended the ban on large-scale fishing in key fishing grounds and the importation of fish to stabilize supply in the markets.

“Importation addresses temporary supply gaps caused by the closed-fishing season or events like typhoons. It complements, not replaces, local fish production to keep prices stable,” he said.

Just last month, the DA approved the importation of additional 8,000 metric tons of frozen fish on top of the earlier allocation of 30,000 MT.

The DA said this helps mitigate the effects of typhoons on the local fish supply.

The DA said the ban is a science-backed move to replenish fish stocks and secure long-term food security for the nation.

Fishing group PAMALAKAYA criticized the move, saying that it disadvantages small fisherfolk and benefits only importers.

“Fish species like sardines, mackerel and round scad spawn heavily during these months. For instance, sardines in Zamboanga Peninsula peak from November to February. Protecting spawning areas during this period allows stocks to recover,” BFAR executive director Isidro Velayo said in defense of the five-month fishing ban.

The DA said it has given out support to affected fisherfolk, including fuel subsidies, livelihood programs and aquaculture assistance. — **Ghio Ong, Romina Cabrera**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/12/15/2407507/seized-mackerel-1st-case-under-agricultural-economic-sabotage-act>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Romualdez eyes ‘mega task force’ to nab rice price manipulators

By: [Jown Manalo](#) - Reporter / [@jownmanaloINO](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 05:48 PM December 15, 2024



Workers load sacks of imported rice from Thailand and Vietnam on a truck in Manila in October 2024 for transport to various dealers and distributors. —File photo by Richard A. Reyes | Philippine Daily Inquirer

MANILA, Philippines — House Speaker Martin Romualdez seeks the formation of a “mega government task force” to run after rice price manipulators and greedy traders.

“A call to immediate action is needed to force a decrease in rice prices for the benefit of the Filipino consumer,” Romualdez said in a statement on Sunday.



He issued the statement after Albay 2nd District Rep. Joey Salceda, who chairs the House ways and means committee, uncovered evidence of [collusion and price manipulation in the rice industry](#), despite reduced import tariffs and oversupply of rice in the country.

According to Romualdez, the proposed task force may be composed of representatives from the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Justice (DOJ), the National Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Customs, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, and the Department of Trade and Industry.

Its functions will include conducting inventories, checking compliance with tax laws and regulations, inspecting warehouses, and padlocking any erring business establishments.

The task force will also submit a monthly report to Congress as part of its oversight functions, Romualdez said.

“The findings of the quinta comm expose a serious betrayal of public trust. The Filipino people are paying unnecessarily high prices for rice, which should now be at P35 to P40 per kilo, due to oversupply and tariff reductions. This blatant manipulation is unacceptable,” he went on.

“We will not allow this exploitation to continue. The House of Representatives will dismantle this cartel, ensure accountability, and protect both consumers and our farmers,” he added.

### **‘Disturbing pattern’**

During the recent hearings of the quinta comm, or the super committee, on making food cheaper, lawmakers revealed a “disturbing pattern” of price-fixing and hoarding among rice importers and traders.

Data presented by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) indicated an oversupply of rice, with the demand-supply ratio dropping from 82.5 percent to 69.4 percent this year, according to Romualdez.

However, it reported that the price of regular-milled rice decreased only slightly from P50.40 per kilogram to P50.16 in October to P49.44 in early November.

Marikina City Rep. Stella Quimbo said rice prices remained “artificially high” despite an abundant supply and the reduced import tariffs under Executive Order 62.

“The rice stocks are more than enough, but the prices are not going down. It is clear that there is collusion between importers and traders,” Quimbo said in Filipino.

Meanwhile, Salceda emphasized that rice prices should have already stabilized at P35 per kilogram, given the significant drop in the landed cost of imported rice, which now averages P33.95 per kilogram.

“The data is clear: The true price of rice should be P35 per kilo. The high prices in the market are due to manipulation,” Salceda said in Filipino.

With this, Romualdez further called on the DOJ and the Philippine Competition Commission to conduct a [formal investigation into the possible existence of a rice cartel](#) in the country.

“This is not just an economic issue. It’s a matter of food security and national stability. The House will use all its powers to hold these cartels accountable, protect our farmers, and bring affordable rice to Filipino households,” he said.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2015764/romualdez-eyes-mega-task-force-to-nab-rice-price-manipulators>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **‘Food irradiation gives PHL products competitive edge in international market’**

John Eiron R. Francisco

December 15, 2024



**THE upgraded irradiation facility at DOST-PNRI headquarters in Quezon City is set to meet the increased demand for radiation processing to match the clients' production and increase their income.**

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—Food irradiation—the application of ionizing radiation to food—processing offers a safer and more efficient preservation method than conventional techniques, according to science research experts.

Unlike chemical methods, such as ethylene oxide—which is used to disinfect herbs and spices—irradiation has a significant advantage in food sterilization, Haydee M. Solomon, Supervising Science Research Specialist at the Irradiation Services Section of the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST-PNRI), told the BusinessMirror during an exclusive interview at the forum titled “Nuke Talk Series: What’s Your ‘Ulam Bestie’?” held at the recent 2024 National Science and Technology Week in this city.

The European Union bans ethylene oxide for food sterilization due to the harmful chemical residues it leaves behind. In contrast, radiation leaves no residue on the product.

Solomon clarified that when ionizing radiation is applied, it passes through the product and is absorbed by microorganisms, effectively killing them without leaving any lingering chemicals or by-products.

“We irradiate the products in its final form. We do not open it. We do not touch the product itself. It’s just the packaging. So, it’s very convenient,” she explained.

She further noted that other preservation methods, such as using ethylene oxide, involve chemicals, while heat treatments can sometimes cause discoloration or even condensation on the product.

The moisture from condensation can create an environment conducive to mold growth, making the product less desirable, she said.

“Heat can also cook the product, which isn’t the case with ionizing radiation,” Solomon added.

She emphasized that radiation is more of a “cold process.” While radiation does emit a small amount of heat, typically raising the temperature of the product by only 1 degree Celsius to 3°C, it is minimal and does not have the same effects as traditional heat treatments.

Solomon added that this makes ionizing radiation a more gentle and effective method of sterilization, particularly for products that could be damaged by heat.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Health Organization, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the food irradiation process does not pose any greater toxicological, microbiological, or nutritional risks compared to traditional food processing methods.

Despite concerns about the potential chemical changes caused by ionizing radiation, these organizations assure that irradiated foods are safe for human consumption.

Asked how to identify if a food item is irradiated or not, experts explained that all irradiated products are required to display the Radura symbol, indicating they have undergone irradiation. The label may also include phrases like “Treated with Radiation” or “Treated by Irradiation.”

Addressing concerns about nutrient loss, Solomon cited several studies showing that irradiated foods retain most of their nutrients. The nutrient loss during irradiation is comparable to what occurs during cooking, freezing, canning, and other common food preservation methods.

Studies have shown that consuming irradiated foods does not expose individuals to radiation or radioactive materials.

Further explaining the safety of food irradiation, Solomon likened it to the safety of medical X-rays on individuals.

She said that radiation beams pass through the food much like X-rays pass through a patient during medical imaging. Just as a person is not radioactive after an X-ray, irradiated food does not retain any radiation or radioactive substances.

### **PHL advances in nuclear preservation**

Moreover, the DOST-PNRI manages a multipurpose gamma irradiation facility designed to process food and agricultural products.

Recently, the facility was upgraded to a semi-commercial scale, enhancing its efficiency and increasing its processing capacity. This improvement allows it to address the growing demand for irradiation services from the food and medical sectors.

According to Solomon, spices are the primary products benefiting from nuclear-based preservation technologies in the Philippines. This method, which utilize gamma rays, is commonly used to treat various spices, shrimp powder, herbal products and seasonings.

Solomon added that the establishment of new facilities, such as the 10 megaelectron volt (MeV) electron beam in Tanay, Rizal, will enable more fresh produce to meet international standards, and is expected to help local growers access global markets, boosting the promotion of Philippine products worldwide.

She emphasized that radiation processing is an effective method for eliminating microorganisms while preserving the quality and integrity of products.

Clients who use this technology not only comply with Food and Drug Administration standards but also gain a competitive edge in the international market, where irradiated products are widely accepted.

Image credits: [DOST-PNRI PHOTO](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/15/food-irradiation-gives-phl-products-competitive-edge-in-international-market/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# Searca photo tilt 2024 spotlights carbon-neutral farming future

BusinessMirror  
December 15, 2024

The Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) has opened its 18th annual photo contest and invites photographers across Southeast Asia to capture compelling images related to the theme “The Future of Farming: Pathways to Carbon-Neutral Agriculture.”

This year’s photo tilt edition of the competition seeks photographs that showcase innovative and sustainable agricultural practices in the Southeast Asia.

“Searca is looking for impactful images that demonstrate practical solutions to the challenges faced by farmers in Southeast Asia while promoting environmental responsibility and sustainable farming methods,” said Searca Director Dr. Glenn Gregorio.

The contest is open to both professional and amateur photographers of all ages who are citizens of Southeast Asian countries, including the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.

Gregorio said submissions will be judged based on their relevance to the theme, technical quality, and overall visual impact.

Winners will receive cash prizes, with \$1,000 for the first place, \$800 for the second place, and \$600 for the third place.

Additional recognitions include the Searca Director’s Choice and the Philippine Department of Education Secretary’s Choice, each receiving \$500, along with \$300 for the Best Youth Photographer and \$300 for the People’s Choice Award, the latter determined through Facebook voting.

Participants must submit original and unaltered photographs that have not previously been awarded or published. Each entrant can submit multiple images, accompanied by captions of up to 100 words explaining the photo’s context and significance.

The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2025. Entries must be submitted through the official Searca Photo Contest website.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/15/searca-photo-tilt-2024-spotlights-carbon-neutral-farming-future/>