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THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA: 6 million bags of NFA rice may rot

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

December 16, 2024 | 12:00am



Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa told The STAR yesterday that the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) removed all the regulatory powers of the NFA.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — At least six million bags of National Food Authority rice have been stocked too long and may rot if not disposed of soon, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA), as Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. urged Congress to pass a law allowing the NFA to sell its stocks in the market.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa told The STAR yesterday that the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) removed all the regulatory powers of the NFA.

“The NFA has at least six million bags (of rice). If only the NFA has the opportunity to sell rice, it can sell in the market at P30 (per kilo). It cannot do it as it will violate the law and will even be charged,” De Mesa said.

He added that under the RTL, the NFA is only allowed to sell its stocks to the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Office of Civil Defense and local government units.

“To prevent the rice stocks from aging, we have the P29 program to release some of the stocks but the volume is not that big. We will have the next harvest season and if the stocks will not be released, it will be difficult for the NFA to procure (palay again from the farmers) because of so many stocks and this is where we will have possible problems,” De Mesa noted.

De Mesa said that even under the RTL, the NFA can only sell rice in the Kadiwa stores if the National Price Coordinating Council recommends to the DA the release of the stocks because of too much increase in the retail prices or shortage in the supply of the grains.

“Under the new law, the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) was empowered to register all the warehouses but the NFA cannot still intervene in the market. It can only happen if there is a food emergency, if there is a spike in the retail price of rice or shortage,” he noted.

He said that during the hearing of the House quinta committee, Tiu Laurel urged lawmakers to pass a law to bring back the mandates of the NFA prior to the RTL.

“The decision (to remove the regulatory powers of the NFA) was too harsh to the point it became powerless in intervening in the market,” De Mesa said.

De Mesa noted that the DA can only intervene through the availability of P40 per kilo of rice in the Kadiwa stores and limited number of markets.

“We are trying to our best (to intervene), through Kadiwa, we are intervening in the markets to show that the retail price (of rice) should be P40 (per kilo) as based on our monitoring, the retail price of regular and well-milled rice is as P45 per kilo but this is only limited as (rice) is sold as high as P60 (per kilo),” he said.

He said that the retail price of the grains should be P40 per kilo amid the implementation of Executive Order 62 and the lower farmgate price of palay.

“All the ingredients (to lower the retail price of rice are available), the buying price of rice in the international market is low, the farmgate price of palay is low and there are many stocks but the retail price does not go down because there is market distortion,” he said.

De Mesa said that there is no proper labeling of rice in the market because of the RTL.

“We have no role in retail. As you can see before, the labeling is correct. Now, there is no proper labeling. You cannot determine which is well-milled, regular, premium, special as before we have the blue, white, yellow. Just what the secretary said, (traders) practically agree on the pricing. The regulation in the wholesaling and retailing of rice was removed from the NFA,” he said.

Price control task force

Speaker Martin Romualdez sought yesterday the formation of what he described as a mega government task force to run after rice price manipulators and greedy traders.

Romualdez made the proposal after the House quinta committee uncovered alarming evidence of collusion and price manipulation in the rice industry, despite reports of oversupply and reduced import tariffs.

He said his proposed task force may be composed of the DA, Department of Justice, including the National Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Customs, Bureau of Internal Revenue and Department of Trade and Industry.

The Speaker said the task force should have the power to conduct inventories, check on compliance with tax laws and rules, inspect warehouses, and to immediately padlock any erring business establishment.

Romualdez proposed that the task force submit a monthly report to Congress as part of its oversight functions. - **Jose Rodel Clapano**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/12/16/2407693/da-6-million-bags-nfa-rice-may-rot>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Government mulls voluntary purchase of raw sugar

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

December 16, 2024 | 12:00am



To hike Farmgate prices

MANILA, Philippines — The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) is mulling a new round of voluntary purchase program that would siphon off a certain level of raw sugar from the market to arrest falling prices of the commodity.

SRA administrator and CEO Pablo Luis Azcona said the agency’s board is now studying the possibility of opening a voluntary purchase program that would encourage traders to buy raw sugar higher than prevailing market prices in exchange for the right to future import programs.

“We are studying what we did last year and finding ways to improve it and make it a lot fairer to participate. (We want) anybody can participate as long as they possess a domestic trading license,” Azcona said.

Under a voluntary purchase program, raw sugar would be bought at a premium and would be classified as “C” sugar or reserved sugar, meaning the stocks would be temporarily held off from market circulation, effectively reducing available supply for sale.

The SRA first implemented such a program in the previous crop year 2023-2024 wherein it was able to hold off over 260,000 MT of raw sugar from market sale for a maximum of three months.

During the first voluntary purchase program, eligible traders reportedly bought sugar at a price between P2,700 and P2,800 per 50-kilogram bag, compared to the prevailing market price back then of around P2,500 per bag.

Farmgate prices of raw sugar also immediately returned to above P2,700 per 50-kilogram bag level following the implementation of the program in the previous crop year.

The SRA chief explained that multiple sugarcane planters federations have written to the agency to ask the government to intervene and address the falling farmgate prices of raw sugar.

“(Agriculture) Secretary (Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.) is also very concerned about the current sugar pricing since there is no oversupply but prices are declining,” Azcona said.

The SRA head said the country’s combined raw and refined sugar stocks are about 450,000 MT, which was around the same level as the 406,000 MT recorded two years ago.

However, Azcona said farmgate prices of raw sugar are polar opposites compared to two years ago, when prices were above P3,000 per 50-kilogram bag.

Today, farmgate prices have fallen to as low as P2,400 per bag of raw sugar, Azcona said.

Azcona pointed out that the current prevailing raw sugar farmgate prices are even lower than last year’s average price of about P2,600 per bag when the country had so much supply at more than 750,000 MT.

“The current pricing is at breakeven or even lower than the cost-to-produce of small-scale farmers,” he said.

The SRA earlier said it supports and is open to any possible probe by the House of the Representatives on the declining farmgate prices of raw sugar that has been detrimental to small-scale sugarcane planters.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/12/16/2407597/government-mulls-voluntary-purchase-raw-sugar>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Speaker bats for creation of anti-rice cartel task force

December 15, 2024 | 7:49 pm



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BUREAU OF

THE GOVERNMENT needs to create a task force to police rice trading, Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez said on Sunday, citing persistently high prices of the staple.

In a statement, Mr. Romualdez said his proposed task force should be composed of the Agriculture, Justice, and Trade and Industry departments, as well as the bureaus of Internal Revenue and Customs, and the National Bureau of Investigation.

The task force should be given the power to conduct rice inventory checks and inspect for regulatory compliance. It should also be allowed to “immediately padlock” rice businesses found with violations, he added.

“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,” he said in a statement. “This blatant manipulation is unacceptable.”

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. issued in June Executive Order No. 62, which reduced rice import tariffs to 15% from 35% to help contain inflation.

The House is conducting an inquiry into a suspected a rice cartel, which is thought to be keeping prices artificially high despite reduced import tariffs.

The retail price of rice remains high despite an “abundant” supply of the grain, Marikina Rep. Stella Luz A. Quimbo said in the same statement. “It is clear that there is collusion between importers and traders.”

In November, the Philippine Statistics Authority said the average price of regular-milled rice was P49.24 per kilo, with well-milled rice selling for P54.64. Special rice averaged P63.

Mr. Romualdez also directed the House quinta committee, which is conducting a joint inquiry into the alleged existence of a rice cartel, to speed up the drafting of amendments to the 2016 Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act.

“This is not just an economic issue — it’s a matter of food security and national stability,” he said. — **Kenneth Christiane L. Basilio**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/12/15/641665/speaker-bats-for-creation-of-anti-rice-cartel-task-force/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Meat imports up 16.8% in 10 months to October

December 16, 2024 | 12:03 am



REUTERS

THE volume of meat imports increased 16.8% in the 10 months to October, driven by higher beef and pork shipments, according to the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI).

The BAI tallied imports of 1.19 billion kilograms of meat during the 10 months, against 1.02 billion kilos a year earlier.

Meat Importers and Traders Association President Emeritus Jesus C. Cham said that imports continue to grow are on track to breach the 1.2 billion kilos of meat imports last year.

“All this has happened despite the volatility of the exchange rate, whose effect will be felt in the new year. With imports still arriving as seen from the utilization rate of the container yards and the slow rate of return of empties, the importers will take stock of the remaining inventory after the Christmas sales and hope the market will remain exuberant,” Mr. Cham said via Viber.

Making up 14% of total imports, beef shipments increased 38% during the period to 51.53 million kilos.

“Beef may end the year with a 50% increase. Clearly, we see the markets appreciating more the value of this red meat,” Mr. Cham added.

Beef from Brazil amounted to 70.86 million kilos, followed by Australia (44.02 million), and Ireland (14.5 million).

Shipments of pork rose 18.6% to 598.28 million kilos during the 10 months, accounting for about 50.2% of all meat imports during the period.

“With the exception of carcasses, all pork items performed strongly with pork meat growing at 25% but offal registering smaller growth at 12%,” he said.

He added that African Swine Fever continues to impact domestic pork production while the lower duty on pork meat is making offal less attractive.

Brazil supplied around 154.51 million kilos of pork, followed by Spain (144.45 million) and Canada (85.82 million).

Shipments of chicken totaled 389.95 million kilos during the period, up 8.6%. They accounted for 32.6% of meat imports.

Mr. Cham said that poultry imports could post an overall increase of 30%, amid higher shipments of chicken leg quarters and mechanically deboned meat.

Brazil remained the top supplier of chicken with 195.32 million kilos, followed by the US (126.91 million) and Canada (14.49 million).

Turkey imports more than tripled to 1.16 million kilos during the period, accounting for 0.10% of the total.

Shipments of buffalo, duck, and lamb continued to decline during the 10-month period.

Imports of duck fell 21.5% to 198,339 kilos, while lamb dipped 9.7% to 603,906 kilos, and buffalo fell 1.9% to 33.01 million. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/12/16/641581/meat-imports-up-16-8-in-10-months-to-october/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Meet SwagBot, the AI-powered robot cattle herder preventing soil degradation

December 16, 2024 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

CANBERRA — With four wheels and a bright red paint job, SwagBot is not your average cow.

But researchers at the University of Sydney say this autonomous robot is on its way to becoming the world’s first “smart cow,” able to make cattle farming more efficient and environmentally friendly.

First launched in 2016 as a simple herding robot capable of traversing rugged terrain, SwagBot has been updated with sensors, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning systems.

The battery-powered SwagBot can now determine the health, type and density of pasture and monitor the health of livestock.

It then uses this information to autonomously herd cattle to the best pastures and move them before land is overgrazed and soil becomes degraded. It can also feed data back to farmers.

“Once the cattle are used to the robot, they will follow the robot around,” said University of Sydney professor of robotics and intelligent systems, Salah Sukkarieh, whose team made SwagBot.

“You want to move the animals to the right part of the pasture where there is good protein, good carbs,” he said. “You want to be able to do that in a very fluid manner without fences.”

Australia is one of the world’s biggest beef exporters, with around 30 million cattle spread across a vast landscape that is often dry and whose pastures can be poor.

Farmers constantly assess how many animals their land can support but many have little control over where the animals graze within large enclosed areas. Overgrazing can lead to poorer soils that support less plant and animal life.

“It (SwagBot) allows us to assess our paddocks in real time in a much more detailed way,” said Erin O’Neill, a part-time farmer who attended a recent demonstration of the robot in a field north of Sydney.

“That allows us to know what bits of pasture are most nutritious, particularly if you’ve got cattle like we do that are pregnant and therefore need a higher quality pasture to aid them through that pregnancy,” she said.

SwagBot, which is still in development, is part of a growing trend in agriculture towards robotics that can make production more efficient and reduce reliance on workers in places such as Australia where hiring people in remote locations can be difficult. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/12/16/641579/meet-swagbot-the-ai-powered-robot-cattle-herder-preventing-soil-degradation/>

MANILA STANDARD:

Speaker calls for task force vs. rice cartels

By Rio N. Araja

December 16, 2024, 1:55 am

House Speaker Martin Romualdez proposed the creation of a mega task force to pursue market manipulators and bring down the price tags of rice.

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

The Speaker made the proposal after the House Quinta Committee led by Ways and Means chairperson and Albay Rep. Joey Salceda uncovered alarming evidence of collusion and price manipulation in the rice industry despite supposed oversupply and reduced import tariffs.

An economist, Salceda explained that rice prices should already stabilize at P35 per kilo, following the significant drop in the landed cost of imported rice, now averaging P33.95 per kilo.

Romualdez explained that the envisioned task force may be composed of representatives from the Department of Agriculture (DA), and the Department of Justice (DOJ), including the National Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Customs, Bureau of Internal Revenue, and Department of Trade and Industry.

The task force should have the power to conduct inventories, check on compliance with tax laws and rules, inspect warehouses, and immediately padlock any erring business establishment, he noted.

It will also be tasked to submit a monthly report to Congress as part of its oversight functions.

“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,” Romualdez noted.

Despite ample supply, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that the price of regular-milled rice decreased only slightly from P50.16-50.40 in October to P49.44 in the early part of last month.

The Speaker also urged the DOJ and the Philippine Competition Commission to hold alleged perpetrators accountable.

It can be recalled that Agap party-list Rep. Nicanor Briones identified two major companies — RBS Universal Grains Traders Corp. and Sodatrade Corp. — as key players, importing a combined 273,000 metric tons of rice under allegedly suspicious arrangements.

“We will not stop until justice is served and the rice industry is free from corruption. The days of exploitation are over,” he stressed.

Additionally, the Speaker called on the Department of Agriculture to intensify monitoring of rice stockpiles and ensure that surplus stocks are released into the market to stabilize prices.

Earlier, 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.

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.

Editor’s Note: This is an updated article. Originally posted with the headline: “Romualdez urges creation of ‘mega task force’ to run after price manipulators”

<https://manilastandard.net/news/top-stories/314536319/romualdez-urges-creation-of-mega-task-force-to-run-after-price-manipulators.html>

MANILA STANDARD:

DA, hog raisers call for more ‘border control’ stations



Department of Agriculture Undersecretary for Livestock Deogracias Victor Savellano (Courtesy: National Meat Inspection Service)

By Miguel Gil

December 16, 2024, 1:30 am

Stakeholders in the private and public sectors welcomed the Marcos administration’s “all-out war” against agricultural smuggling as part of a renewed impetus to ensure the availability of food at affordable prices.

They called for the establishment of “border control” facilities at all major ports of entry in the country to screen agricultural imports.

In an interview, Agriculture Undersecretary for Livestock Deogracias Victor Savellano said while the imminent opening of the country’s first Cold Examination Facility in Agriculture (CEFA) in Angat, Bulacan is a groundbreaking development, such facilities should be replicated nationwide to be truly effective.

He noted that the DA targets to build similar inspection stations in the ports at the Manila International Container Port (MICP), Subic Bay, Cebu and Davao.

Savellano said his agency anticipates that bidding for the construction of additional quarantine and inspection facilities to commence in about six months.

“This [more quarantine facilities] will enable the government to effectively filter what is coming in [from overseas]. We need them in every major port of entry, not just in one or two, to deal a telling blow on smuggling,” he said in a mixture of Filipino and English.

For his part, Jose Elias Inciong, chairman of the United Broiler and Raisers’ Association (UBRA), welcomed the importance of the Marcos Administration’s renewed emphasis on curbing agricultural smuggling, saying the illegal importation of agricultural goods has been suffocating local food producers for years.

Inciong said that, in addition to potentially stopping smuggling, the envisioned CEFA inspection sites will also help prevent the entry of animal and plant diseases.

UBRA’s chair said that it was due to the lack of effective quarantine facilities that local piggeries are still plagued by African Swine Fever (ASF).

“Let’s not forget that the lack of CEFA stations is what allowed ASF to enter the country in the first place. The disease has decimated up to 50 percent of the hog raisers sector, and we are still contending with it to this day,” he added.

For his part, House Speaker Martin Romualdez directed the Quinta Comm to expedite legislation, including amendments to strengthen the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016.

Editor’s Note: This is an updated article. Originally posted with the headline: “DA, hog raisers welcome ‘all-out war’ vs. agricultural smuggling”

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/314536297/da-hog-raisers-welcome-all-out-war-vs-agricultural-smuggling.html>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Palay farmgate price falls to P20/kilo in November

By **Giselle P. Jordan**

December 16, 2024

THE average farmgate price of palay (unmilled rice) in November fell by 8.7 percent at P20.03 per kilogram (kg) from P21.95 in the same period in 2023, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) announced on Friday.

Data from the PSA also showed the November 2024 price dropped by 2.1 percent compared to P20.47/kg in October.

Fourteen of the country's 17 regions likewise reflected negative growth in average palay farmgate prices.

Region 13, or the Caraga Administrative Region (Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Dinagat Islands, Surigao del Norte and Surigao del Sur), recorded the biggest decrease in prices at 22.3 percent, while Region 8, Eastern Visayas, posted the biggest gain with a 15-percent price hike.

In the previous month, Region 7 (Central Visayas) had a 14.7-percent price decline.

On the other hand, six regions achieved a positive price growth rate compared to October, with the Cordillera Administrative Region or CAR (Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga and Mountain Province) posting an 8-percent increase.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/16/business/top-business/palay-farmgate-price-falls-to-p20kilo-in-november/2022074>

THE MANILA TIMES:

PH meat imports hit 1.19 MMT in Jan-Oct

By Janine Alexis Miguel
December 16, 2024

THE Philippines' meat imports from January to October amounted to 1.19 million metric tons (MMT), 16.8 percent higher than the 1.01 million metric tons (MT) recorded in the same period last year, the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Bureau of Animal Industry said.

The surge was driven by pork at 598,276 MT or 50.24 percent of total shipments. This was also bigger than 2023's 504,308-MT record. Chicken imports, meanwhile, totaled 389,952 MT or 32.7 percent of the total. This was up by 8.55 percent from the comparable period's 359,230 MT.

Beef shipments recorded the largest annual increase of 38.8 percent at 167,548 MT from 120,640 MT.

On the other hand, buffalo imports were down to 33,007.4 MT or 1.9 percent lower than the 31,647 MT posted a year earlier.

The drop in lamb imports was big at 603.9 MT, 9.7 percent lower than last year's 669.03 MT.

The biggest dip in imports was duck meat, which fell by 21.5 percent at 198.33 MT compared to 252.78 MT in 2023.

Top suppliers

Brazil was the Philippines' top supplier from January to October at 420,359 MT or 35.3 percent of the total.

The United States and Spain followed with 179,557 MT and 146,311 MT, respectively. Canada exported 102,870 MT of meat to the Philippines; Australia, 63,779 MT; and the Netherlands, 58,725 MT also during the period.

Nonetheless, the Foreign Agricultural Services (FAS) of the US Department of Agriculture has projected the Philippines will produce more of its own pork, chicken meat, and beef as investors come in.

In its latest report, the FAS said the Philippines' domestic pork production would total 1.04 million MT in 2024 compared to 2023's forecast of 950,000 MT due to swine repopulation efforts. The

agency likewise increased the 2024 beef production forecast to 183,000 MT from 2023's 182,000 MT. Executive Order 62, which reduced tariffs on imports, will help augment the local supply of agricultural commodities, such as chicken meat, due to strong market demand over the medium-term, the FAS said.

In 2023, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported that over five MMT of livestock, poultry, and other animal products was produced in the country. The DA said this was a sign of recovery from the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and an outbreak of animal diseases.

Another factor was the DA's lifting the ban on products from countries that had been stricken by bird flu and African swine fever.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/16/business/top-business/ph-meat-imports-hit-119-mmt-in-jan-oct/2022073>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Meat imports up by 17% in Jan-Oct

Ada Pelonia
December 16, 2024

The country's meat imports rose by nearly 17 percent as of end-October on higher purchases of chicken, pork and beef from abroad.

Data from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) showed that meat imports expanded by 16.84 percent to 1.19 million metric tons (MMT) from January to October this year, compared to the 1.02 MMT recorded in the same period last year.

The end-October figure is within striking distance of the 1.2 MMT imported by the Philippines for the whole of 2023.

According to the Meat Importers and Traders Association (Mita), meat shipments went up despite the volatility in foreign exchange.

"All this has happened despite the volatility of the exchange rate, whose effect will be felt in the New Year," Mita President Emeritus Jesus Cham said via Viber.

"With imports still arriving as seen from the utilization rate of the container yards and the slow rate of return of empties, the importers will take stock of the remaining inventory after the Christmas sales and hope the market will remain exuberant," he added.

Based on BAI data, chicken imports as of October 31 grew by 8.55 percent to 389,952 metric tons (MT) from 359,230 MT. Mechanically deboned meat (MDM) accounted for a chunk of the shipments at 213,490 MT.

"Poultry may end the year with a 30-percent overall increase. Chicken cuts are down perhaps due to high price of breasts and wings while the reimposed safeguard duty may have reduced the import of chicken livers," Cham said.

Pork shipments accounted for the largest share of the country's meat imports in the reference period as it jumped by 18.63 percent to 598,276 MT from the 504,308 MT recorded last year.

Cham noted that African swine fever (ASF) continues to affect local hog production, “while the lower duty on pork meat is making offal less attractive relative.”

Beef imports registered the biggest jump during the period as shipments surged by 38.88 percent to 167,548 MT from 120,640 MT, the bulk of which consisted of beef cuts at 116,429 MT.

“Beef made the most gains with a whopping 38-percent increase [year-on-year]. It may end the year with a 50 percent increase. Clearly, we see the markets appreciating more the value of this red meat,” Cham said.

He also noted the uptick in shipments of hindquarters at 840 MT, despite buffalo registering a 1.9 percent decline to 33,007 MT in the reference period from 33,647 MT last year.

The country did not import this type of buffalo meat in 2023, based on BAI data.

“Buffalo looks a bit flat. However, the importation of hindquarter cuts is a new phenomenon that bears looking into,” he said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/16/meat-imports-up-by-17-in-jan-oct/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Govt keen on program to boost sugar prices

Ada Pelonia
December 16, 2024

The government may implement another round of its sugar voluntary purchase program to stop the decline in millgate prices, according to the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA).

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said the program would offer traders a chance to purchase raw sugar at a premium. In return, participants get allocation for future import programs.

“We’re studying what we did last year and finding ways to improve it. [We want to] make sure that anybody can participate in the program as long as they have a domestic trading license,” Azcona told reporters in an interview.

Last March, SRA issued Sugar Order (SO) 2 for crop year 2023-2024 which opened the first voluntary purchase program. Under the order, eligible participants could buy raw sugar at a premium price which would then be temporarily classified as “C” (reserved sugar) to ensure reasonable and stable prices.

“This will make the playing field a lot more level and fair,” Azcona said.

He said recently that the regulatory agency is ready to probe the falling millgate prices despite the low supply of sugar. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/10/sra-to-probe-drop-in-millgate-prices/>)

The SRA chief made this statement after a lawmaker urged the government to stabilize falling sugar prices.

He said the lowest millgate price on record was P2,400 per 50-kilo bag, which amounts to less than P50 per kilo.

Azcona noted that the stock level of raw sugar stood at 150,000 metric tons (MT) while refined sugar was 300,000 MT.

He said these numbers were higher than raw and refined sugar stocks two years ago at 178,000 MT and 228,000 MT, respectively. However, millgate prices at the time settled at over P3,000 per 50-kilo bag.

“We have to remember [that] 85 to 90 percent of our farmers are small farmers [tilling] one to two hectares...the current pricing is at breakeven or even lower than their cost to produce,” Azcona said.

“We are coming from bad weather, higher [production] costs, lower yield, and yet our prices are exceptionally low.”

Azcona said the ideal price should range from P2,650 per bag to P2,728 per bag, offering planters a slightly better margin.

He also expressed the concern that farmers would shift to planting other crops if the chance to earn will not come.

“The whole industry will basically dwindle and disappear if we no longer have sugarcane. Globally, the sugar supply is also decreasing. So we cannot be dependent on outside sources all the time.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/16/govt-keen-on-program-to-boost-sugar-prices/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

SPDA ties up with SMC for Davao del Sur poultry farm

Manuel Cayon
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Davao City—The Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA) has partnered with San Miguel Corp. (SMC) to put up a poultry farm in Davao del Sur, the Philippine Information Agency said.

In its regular news dispatch, the PIA said the two parties inaugurated the project in Barangay Labon, Municipality of Sulop, Davao del Sur.

The poultry farm consists of two poultry houses which can accommodate 40,000 heads of broiler chicken per house.

The project aims to provide an adequate supply of chicken in Mindanao and to increase broiler chicken production in Davao Region that would help stabilize the prices of chicken in the market, the SPDA said.

The agreement would have the SPDA undertake the production side while San Miguel, a known provider of poultry and dairy meat and other products would buy the poultry produced at the farm.

The SPDA said San Miguel has its own poultry farm in the province to meet its own corporate production targets. Its poultry farm in Hagonoy town is the largest poultry production site in the country.

“There was a feasibility study before that there was a shortage of chicken in Mindanao, that is why even San Miguel Corp. put up a big poultry farm here in Davao del Sur. And SPDA was also in the past years in the poultry business,” said SPDA Administrator and Chief Executive Officer Abdulghani Gerry Salapuddin.

He said San Miguel will supply the poultry farm project with the chicks, the technology including technical support. “And then all the products that we produce they buy from us. So, they’d be the one to market and distribute it in Mindanao.”

SPDA has allocated P54 million for the first phase of the project and said it would allocate another P98 million for the expansion.

Salapuddin said the project should have taken off two years ago but the initial plan to establish it in Zamboanga City did not materialize due to the disagreement with the land owners.

“I told our executive committee to look for an alternative site outside Zamboanga City which is near the city center but far from the populated area and finally Mr. Cris Dagala, project manager found this lot,” Salapuddin said.

Senator Ronald dela Rosa, who was the guest of honor when the project was inaugurated last month, has asked SPDA to ensure that local residents are employed in the farm.

“With this project there is a big chance that people those that are idle could gain employment given the right training, the right skills and improvement required for the job.”

He said Sulop town used to have peace and order problems and that the project could ease the plight of residents as he also assured the SPDA of his support to any of its development initiatives to help the local government.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/16/spda-ties-up-with-smc-for-davao-del-sur-poultry-farm/>

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:

EDITORIAL - Sampolan ang agri smugglers!

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Wala pang nasasampolan si President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. na mga smugglers ng agricultural products mula nang lagdaan niya ang batas noong nakaraang Setyembre. Sabi niya nang lagdaan ang Republic 12022 o ang Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, mapaparusahan na ang mga nanabotahe sa ekonomiya. Hindi raw titigil ang pamahalaan hangga't hindi nahuhuli at napaparusahan ang mga smuggler ng agri products na kinabibilangan ng bigas, isda, gulay, asukal at marami pa. Ayon sa Presidente, bukod sa nadadaya ang pamahalaan, apektado ang kabuhayan ng mga lokal na magsasaka. Inaagawan ang mga ito ng mga ganid na smugglers.

Ilang buwan makaraang lagdaan ang RA 12022, nakasabat ang Department of Agriculture (DA) at Bureau of Customs (BOC) ng 21 containers ng frozen mackerel na galing China na nagkakahalaga ng P178.5 milyon sa Manila International Container Port (MICP). Hindi pa nakakasuhan hanggang ngayon ang consignee ng shipment.

Ipinasya naman ni Marcos na ipamahagi ang mga nakumpiskang mackerel sa mga mahihirap na residente ng Baseco, Port Area, Manila noong Sabado. Nasa 21,000 pamilya ang nakatanggap ng

dalawang kilong mackerel bukod pa sa ipinamahagi ng Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), habang bawat pamilya ay nakatanggap ng dalawang kilo ng mackerel.

Sabi ng Presidente, naiiba raw ang pamasko nila na sa halip na hamon at mga lechon, mga isda ang kanilang dala. Ginanap ang pamamahagi ng mackerel at iba pa sa Benigno S. Aquino Jr. Elementary School Gym. Sinabi rin ni Marcos na pinaigting pa ng pamahalaan ang pagtugis sa agri smugglers ganundin sa hoarders. Namahagi rin ng mackerel sa iba pang mga pinakamahihirap na barangay sa Metro Manila, Obando at Meycauayan, Bulacan, at Bacoor, Cavite.

Kung maraming isda ang ipinupuslit sa bansa, mas marami ang bigas dahil sa sabwatan ng rice importers at mga tusong negosyante. Kahit na ibinaba na ang taripa para sa imported rice, mataas pa rin ang presyo ng bigas sa pamilihan na halos umabot sa mahigit P50 bawat kilo.

Noong Setyembre, maraming bigas ang natengga sa MICP at iba pang pantalan sa bansa. Sabi ng Philippine Port Authority, hindi kinukuha ng importer ang bigas dahil balak i-ward ang mga ito. Kapag naubos na ang bigas sa mga palengke, saka ilalabas ng mga tusong negosyante.

Hindi na nagkaroon ng follow-up sa mga natenggang bigas. Marahil nasa mga bodega at ilalabas lamang kapag mataas na ang presyo. Ang mga bigas na ito ang dapat kumpiskahin at ipamahagi sa mga mahihirap. Tamang-tama sa mackerel.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/opinyon/2024/12/16/2407698/editoryal-sampolan-ang-agri-smugglers>