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MANILA BULLETIN:

Ensuring ample, affordable rice supply for all Filipinos

BY [MANILA BULLETIN](#)

Dec 17, 2024 05:34 AM



Determined to ensure the stability of the price of rice at the retail level, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel has been doing the rounds of Kadiwa ng Pangulo kiosks where the staple is selling at ₱40 per kilo.

This comes on the heels of latest projections made by the US Department of Agriculture. The USDA eyes a looming increase in rice imports, spurred by production declines caused by La Niña and a series of natural disasters that have hit the country's rice-producing areas, drastically reducing yields at a time when demand is on the rise. This confluence of factors presents not only economic but also social ramifications, particularly for the lowest income classes, who are most vulnerable to price hikes and food insecurity.

According to the USDA, the Philippines is set to become the world's largest rice importer for three consecutive marketing years. This marks a troubling shift, as the country moves from a self-sufficient producer to a net importer, relying increasingly on foreign rice to meet domestic demand. While rice imports have historically played a role in balancing supply shortages, the sheer scale of expected imports — projected at around 5.4 million metric tons in 2024-2025 — highlights the growing gap between production and consumption.

This gap is widening due to a surge in rice consumption. Rice is a staple in the Filipino diet, and for many, it is the primary source of sustenance. From 14.8 million metric tons (MT) in 2020-2021, rice consumption in the Philippines is expected to rise to 17.4 million MT in the 2024-2025 marketing year. This increase is driven by several factors, including population growth, changing dietary habits, and the socio-economic realities faced by millions of Filipinos. As consumption continues to climb, the supply side struggles to keep pace, further exacerbating the need for imports.

Rice is not just a food item. It's a cornerstone of economic stability for many Filipino families. The lowest-income classes, particularly those living in rural areas where rice is grown, are most exposed to the fluctuating prices and availability of the commodity. Typhoons and extreme weather events have already driven up production costs, and now the anticipated increase in imports will likely push domestic rice prices higher due to a combination of market dynamics and logistical challenges.

The impact on low-income families could be devastating. With rising rice prices, these households will spend an even larger proportion of their income on food. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, food accounts for more than 40 percent of household expenditure among the lowest 30 percent of income earners. A rise in rice prices would, therefore, have an outsized effect on their purchasing power, further entrenching poverty and inequality. With cheaper imports flooding the market, many small-scale rice farmers are likely to be pushed into even deeper poverty.

To mitigate the impact of these changes, the government must adopt more comprehensive measures. First, improving domestic rice production through investments in irrigation, farming technology, and disaster-resilient crops could help reduce the need for imports in the future. Second, addressing the rising cost of rice through targeted subsidies or price controls can help protect the most vulnerable populations from the worst effects of inflation. Lastly, creating more robust social safety nets for farmers, including income support and disaster relief, would provide a cushion against market volatility.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/12/17/ensuring-ample-affordable-rice-supply-for-all-filipinos>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Meat processors appeal ban on Indian buffalo meat imports

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

December 17, 2024 | 12:00am



In a letter to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., the Philippine Association of Meat Processors Inc. (PAMPI) sought his intervention on an order recently issued by BAI-OIC Director Diosamia Sevilla concerning the evaluation of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs) for imported buffalo meat (IBM) from certain areas in India.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Meat processors sounded the alarm over possible supply disruptions on raw materials if a hold order issued by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) on the importation of buffalo meat from certain Indian states would not be reversed soon.

In a letter to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., the Philippine Association of Meat Processors Inc. (PAMPI) sought his intervention on an order recently issued by BAI-OIC Director Diosamia Sevilla concerning the evaluation of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs) for imported buffalo meat (IBM) from certain areas in India.

Sevilla recently issued a memorandum holding in abeyance the review of all SPSICs for the importation of Indian buffalo meat originating from the states of Bihar, Maharashtra and Telangana.

According to Sevilla, the order was issued after an inspection team formed by the Department of Agriculture found out that the three Indian states have confirmed cases of the foot and mouth disease (FMD).

The temporary suspension of the review of SPSICs was meant to serve as a precautionary measure to protect the country's domestic population against FMD.

SPSIC is a document issued by the government to certify that incoming shipments of goods and commodities are safe to consume and do not pose any threats to human, plant and animal health. Without it, any imported goods and commodities will not be allowed to enter the country and would be flagged as smuggled items.

However, PAMPI argued that the BAI's decision could cause disruptions on the supplies of processed meat products like corned beef and meat loaves to be felt in the first quarter of next year.

"We have IBM raw materials that have been contracted and are ready for shipment from those states to meet our production requirements in January and February next year. The SPS ban will leave us with virtually no raw material inventory to process into canned goods by then," the group said in its letter dated Dec. 12.

The group claimed that its imports of Indian buffalo meat from Maharashtra and Telangana states since 1994 have not caused any FMD issues.

"This is notwithstanding the fact that sporadic FMD outbreaks did occur as FMD is endemic in India," PAMPI said.

PAMPI said that there has been no reported case of transmission of the FMD virus from the imported Indian buffalo meat in the past 30 years because both DA-accredited suppliers and local meat processors strictly comply with the guidelines set by the World Organization for Animal Health.

The group added that meat processors have been implementing the necessary protocols in inactivating FMD virus should they be found present in the raw materials they sourced.

"The SPS ban on the three states will set a disastrous precedent as it will result in our industry losing India as the only source of buffalo meat raw material," it said.

PAMPI urged Tiu Laurel to conduct a "circumspect" and "more thorough" review of the matter to avoid impeding the country's food security.

"Pending the outcome of such a review, we respectfully suggest that the status quo ante be maintained," it said.

Late last month, non-government organizations urged the DA to immediately suspend the importation of carabeef from areas in India with reported FMD outbreaks to protect the domestic livestock industry.

Federation of Free Farmers and MAGSASAKA Party-list cited a report by a recent inspection mission of BAI to India indicating that there were FMD outbreaks in some parts of India where imported carabeef are sourced.

The groups pointed out that the country would still have other areas in India to source its carabeef requirement if the states of Maharashtra and Telangana would be banned.

Local meat processors import carabeef as raw material for their various processed meat products. The country imports 32 to 48 million kilos of carabeef from India annually.

The WOAHP identifies FMD as a “severe” and “highly” contagious transboundary animal disease that has huge potential to disrupt global livestock production and trade. The disease affects cattle, swine, sheep and other cloven-hoofed ruminants.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/12/17/2407832/meat-processors-appeal-ban-indian-buffalo-meat-imports>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

OCD warns of lahar flow in 13 Negros areas

[Gilbert Bayoran](#), [Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

December 17, 2024 | 12:00am

BACOLOD CITY, Philippines — The Office of Civil Defense has warned of a potential lahar hazard flow from Kanlaon, which may endanger 644,487 residents in 13 cities and municipalities on Negros Island, as some areas near the volcano experienced rainfall.

Citing a hazard map issued by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs), the OCD identified these areas as the cities of Bago, La Carlota and Himamaylan and the towns of Pontevedra, Pulupandan, San Enrique, Valladolid, Binalbagan, Hinigaran, Isabela, La Castellana and Moises Padilla – all in Negros Occidental – and Canlaon City in Negros Oriental.

Phivolcs had warned of an increased risk of ashfall turning into lahar as it expects the development of a low-pressure area in the coming weeks.

It said the identified areas are likely to be affected by lahar flow from the estimated three million metric tons of ash deposits after the Dec. 9 eruption – a volume that is three times greater than the ash deposits recorded in June.

Phivolcs director Teresito Bacolcol also said in a radio interview yesterday that a hazardous eruption is still possible as he warned that magma and lahar pose a threat to affected residents around the volcano.

“Yes, (a stronger eruption is possible). That’s the reason why we raised Alert Level 3. The meaning of Alert Level 3 is that a hazardous eruption is possible in the following weeks,” Bacolcol said.

He cited some indications that another eruption will take place.

“The number of volcanic earthquakes has increased to 12. Although this is much lower than what we have measured last Sept. 11, the sulfur dioxide (emission) reached 6,535 tons per day. There is also swelling of the volcano,” Bacolcol said.

He noted that the eruption on Dec. 9 generated around three million cubic meters of magma.

“We don’t want our kababayans to spend their Christmas and New Year in evacuation centers. But we cannot control the behavior of the volcano. So again when we say Alert Level 3, a possible hazardous eruption may take place in the coming weeks. As to when exactly, we cannot say. We assess this on a day-to-day basis,” Bacolcol said.

P1.39 million damage to agriculture

Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture (DA) yesterday said the damage brought by Kanlaon's eruption to the agriculture sector has reached P1.39 million.

Based on the latest bulletin from the DA's operations center, at least 21 hectares of plantations were affected by ashfall and lahar. It also reported a production loss of at least 49 metric tons affecting 40 farmers.

The DA said the damage to rice production totaled P620,280 covering 16 hectares, with a production loss of 27 metric tons. Damage to high-value crops, it added, reached P420,400 covering 0.84 hectares and a production loss of eight MT.

“In response to the needs of farmers affected by the Kanlaon volcanic activity, the department is providing various forms of assistance, including agricultural inputs such as rice and corn seeds, as well as drugs and biologics for livestock animals from regional field office 6,” the DA said.

It added that the agency's Quick Response Fund is available for the rehabilitation and recovery of affected areas.

Affected farmers can avail themselves of a P25,000 loan from the Survival and Recovery loan program of the Agricultural Credit Policy Council. The loan is payable in three years at zero interest.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/12/17/2407926/ocd-warns-lahar-flow-13-negros-areas>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Time to lock-up agricultural smugglers, hoarders, profiteers, and cartel operators!

By: [Jake J. Maderazo](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 05:00 AM December 17, 2024

Agricultural smuggling has long plagued the Philippines, depriving legitimate farmers and fishermen of their hard-earned livelihoods. The actions of a few insatiable and insensitively greedy traders have not only undermined the nation's food security but also pushed countless Filipino families deeper into poverty through their price manipulations and cartelization of public marketplaces. Despite the dire consequences faced by ordinary citizens, the perpetrators managed to operate with impunity, largely untouched by previous administrations and immune even to the killing threats proclaimed during the past regime.

The cost of this unchecked illegal trade is staggering. According to the Department of Finance, an estimated P15 billion has been lost to tax leakage over the last nine years due to rampant agricultural smuggling. The situation remains grim: since January of this year alone, the Department of Agriculture has reported the seizure of over P2 billion worth of smuggled agricultural and fishery products, undertaken by combined operatives from various regulatory agencies. Rice, our staple food, tops the list of smuggled goods—followed closely by meat, fish, vegetables, and fruits. In a bold move, the Department has already blacklisted ten companies for importing food products without the necessary clearance; two were found unlicensed while three faced sanctions related to price manipulation and collusion.

However, hope is on the horizon with the recent enactment of Republic Act 12022, known as the “Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Law.” This landmark legislation signals a decisive shift in our nation's approach to combating agricultural smuggling. For the first time, severe penalties—including lifetime imprisonment and fines that can reach up to five times the value of the smuggled goods—are being levied against those who dare exploit our farmers and fisheries. This law should not only be celebrated but also fervently enforced.

The implications of RA 12022 are monumental. By classifying smuggling, profiteering, hoarding, and cartel operations involving agricultural and fishery products as **non-bailable offenses**, we draw a clear line in the sand. We signal zero tolerance for anyone willing to engage in activities that exploit our farmers, manipulate market prices, and threaten our national food supply. The establishment of the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council and Enforcement Group reflects a strong commitment to much-needed oversight in this vital sector. It is imperative that these bodies operate effectively to unearth the masterminds and accomplices behind these despicable acts, dismantling smuggling networks at every level without fear or favor. And if possible, please include in the next amendment the immediate seizure of their personal assets (cash and properties) especially those derived from their illegal activities.

Recent actions taken under this new law offer promising examples of just how effective this initiative can be. President Marcos' distribution of approximately P178.5 million worth of confiscated mackerel, round scads, and bonito from China demonstrates that we can turn the tide against economic sabotage. Rather than being thrown away or sold off in government auctions—paving the way for smugglers to reclaim ownership—580,000 kilos of unauthorized imports failing to meet sanitary standards were repurposed for good. Families in evacuation centers, hospitals, care facilities, and prisons benefitted from this initiative, highlighting our responsibility to protect local agriculture and support vulnerable communities against the scourge of economic sabotage.

Moreover, last year, the timely intervention of the President in distributing 42,180 smuggled sacks of rice valued at P42 million seized from the port of Zamboanga showcased a proactive stance against agricultural crime and hunger. Instead of allowing these goods to rot away at ports, the government took decisive action to redistribute seized food, alleviating the burdens faced by impoverished families grappling with food insecurity. I vividly remember the late former Nueva Ecija congressman Rene Diaz, a noted tax expert, excitedly sharing that he had recommended this distribution strategy of seized smuggled goods to President Marcos, emphasizing they now rightfully belong to the government after being abandoned by their smugglers.

Yet, amidst these advancements, a pressing question lingers: Will the implementation of RA 12022 live up to its monumental potential? It's imperative that momentum is maintained—beyond mere policy enactment—to ensure rigorous execution. Our agricultural sector deserves champions, not traitors. Those who choose to engage in smuggling and undermine our domestic producers must face

the full weight of the law. The time for leniency is over; our future hinges on safeguarding our agricultural integrity with unwavering seriousness.

It is high time we come together in vigilance. Each one of us bears the significant responsibility to protect our farmers, our fisheries, and ultimately, our nation's food supply. As citizens, we must engage actively, supporting authority efforts in enforcing this pivotal law and make our food prices more stable and yet affordable. The fight against agricultural smuggling cannot solely rest on governmental shoulders; it is a collective moral obligation that falls on all of us.

Let unity and resolve guide us as we take a stand against agricultural smugglers. Now is the time for us to see these perpetrators jailed and their illegal and nefarious pricing strategies ended. The future of our farmers, the consuming public, and our entire nation depends on it. We can no longer afford to allow those who profit from illegalities to hold our food system hostage. Let us commit ourselves to this cause with urgency and tenacity, ensuring that every Filipino can access safe, affordable, and locally-sourced food—a right we cannot take for granted any longer.

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/179244/time-to-lock-up-agricultural-smugglers-hoarders-profiteers-and-cartel-operators>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Agri, Trade departments to jointly push for expanded farm exports

December 16, 2024 | 8:54 pm



REUTERS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Monday that it is collaborating with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to boost farm exports.

“The agencies signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) aimed at increasing export sales of key commodities, including bananas, mangoes, and seaweed, while promoting high-value crops like coffee and cacao,” the DA said in a statement.

The MoA focuses on trade promotion, strategic investment, empowering small and medium enterprises, and resolving issues like market access and tariffs.

The effort will also involve the Philippine Exporters Confederation, Inc., and the Philippine Food Processors and Exporters Organization, Inc.

“We’re proud to formalize this partnership with the DTI... Combining the resources and expertise of both agencies will unlock the full potential of Philippine agriculture,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said.

The DA will also establish an Agri-Export Help Desk to manage export-related concerns.

The DA is also planning to organize agricultural commodity councils starting in January to enhance coordination between government and private businesses.

“By improving market access and fostering innovation, the DA and DTI aim to position the Philippines as a global leader in food exports, benefiting farmers, fisherfolk, and other stakeholders across the value chain,” the DA added.

The DA’s Export Development Office has implemented programs to boost exports of bananas, mangoes, seaweed, coconuts, and durian. Crops like coffee and cacao are also being prioritized.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, agricultural exports rose 21.8% to \$1.97 billion during the third quarter, accounting for about 10.3% of total exports. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/12/16/641951/agri-trade-departments-to-jointly-push-for-expanded-farm-exports/>

REMATE:

DA pinuri ng solon sa pinalawak na Rice-for-All program

December 16, 2024 17:32



Kuha ni

Danny Querubin | Remate News Central

PINAPURIHAN ni Navotas representative Toby Tiangco ang Department of Agriculture (DA) sa pagpapalawak nito ng Rice-for-All program at pagpapatupad ng mas murang bigas sa panahon ng bakasyon.

“Sakto sa Kapaskuhan ang pagpapalawak ng implementation ng Rice-for-All Program. Mabibili na sa mas marami pang public markets, pati na train stations, ang P40 kada kilo na bigas kaya maiibsan din nito ang mga gastusin ng ating mga kababayan,” aniya.

Sinabi ni Tiangco na ang programa ay umaayon sa pangako ng administrasyon na labanan ang inflation at ibaba ang presyo ng mga bilingin.

“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. Itong karagdagang areas na mag-ooffer ng murang bigas ay patunay na seryoso si President Bongbong sa pagtupad sa kanyang commitment sa ating mga kababayan,” pahayag ni Tiangco.

“I’m confident this program will continue to expand, given the President’s clear directive to explore all avenues to lower the prices of food staples. Kahit papa’no, mas masaya ang Pasko kung mas magaan sa bulsa ang mga biling tulad ng bigas,” dagdag niya.

Ayon sa DA, ang bigas na nasa ₱40 kada kilo sa ilalim ng programa ay available na sa Maypajo Public Market (Caloocan City), Murphy Market and Cloverleaf Balintawak (Quezon City), La Huerta Market (Parañaque City), at Trabajo Market (Sampaloc, Maynila).

Ang programang Rice-for-All ay accessible din sa LRT Recto Station at sa mga istasyon ng MRT sa Ayala, North Avenue, at Cubao.

“We commend the Department of Agriculture, led by Secretary Tiu, for their relentless efforts to bring down the prices of basic food commodities across the country,” sabi pa niya. **Jojo Rabulan**

<https://remate.ph/da-pinuri-ng-solon-sa-pinalawak-na-rice-for-all-program/>

REMATE:

CamNorte farm negatibo sa bird flu

December 16, 2024 16:50



MANILA, Philippines – Sinabi na lahat ng mga swab sample na nakolekta mula sa mga manok at pato sa loob ng isang kilometrong radius na nakapalibot sa dating apektadong sakahan sa Talisay, Camarines Norte ay nag-negatibo sa bird flu, sinabi ng isang regional field office ng Department of Agriculture (DA) noong Linggo.

Kinumpirma ito ni DA Bicol regional executive director Rodel Tornilla nang matanggap ang mga resulta ng real-time PCR test para sa influenza Type A noong Disyembre 12, na nagsasaad na lahat ng 137 oropharyngeal swab sample ay negatibo.

Nabatid kay Tornilla na ang isang kilometrong radius surveillance areas mula sa dalawang ground zero ay kinabibilangan ng mga barangay ng San Nicolas, Binanuaan, at San Francisco sa bayan ng Talisay; barangay Awitan at Gahonon sa Daet; at Barangay Ginacutan sa Vinzons.

Ang mga sample ng oropharyngeal swab ay kinuha mula sa mga domestic avian species tulad ng duck, gamefowls, at manok mula sa iba't ibang may-ari sa mga nabanggit na barangay.

Ito, habang iniulat ng Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) nitong Miyerkules ang pagtuklas ng Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Type A Subtype H5N2 sa isang duck farm na matatagpuan sa Talisay, Camarines Norte

Sinabi ng ahensya na ang positibong resulta ay iniulat noong Disyembre 6, 2024 ng Animal Disease Diagnosis and Reference Laboratory, kasunod ng nakagawiang surveillance na isinagawa ng DA Regional Field Office V noong Nobyembre.

Nabatid kay regional office na magpapatuloy ang kanilang quick response team na magsasagawa ng active surveillance sa susunod na pitong kilometrong radius mula sa 2 ground zero sa Camarines Norte. (*Santi Celario*)

<https://remate.ph/camnorte-farm-negatibo-sa-bird-flu/>

MANILA STANDARD:

Solon: Review agri practices in ASEAN

By Maricel Cruz

December 16, 2024, 11:10 pm

Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan of Bicol Saro party-list group underscored the urgency of reevaluating agricultural practices in ASEAN countries amid the threats posed by climate change and other “escalating challenges” to food security and long-term prosperity in the region.

Yamsuan said the ASEAN should prioritize sustainable investments in the food, agriculture and forestry sectors, while adopting a collaborative approach that involves governments, civil societies, private sectors, and parliamentarians who can shape policies and allocate resources to support this goal.

“Parliamentary leadership is crucial in driving the policy reforms needed to enhance food security and mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change on our food systems. It is incumbent upon us, as elected representatives, to champion policies that incentivize sustainable agricultural practices, promote agro-ecology, safeguard biodiversity, and provide support to farmers and rural communities,” said Yamsuan at the meeting held recently in Indonesia to discuss the role of parliaments in championing the ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture and Forestry (ASEAN-RAI).

The event is the third in a series of meetings held this year to discuss the effective implementation of the ASEAN-RAI. The meetings, which began in April, were organized by the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) in coordination with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314536737/solon-review-agri-practices-in-asean.html>

MANILA STANDARD:

Gov't bolsters bid to protect wetland areas

By CCC News

December 16, 2024, 7:05 pm

The government is strengthening efforts to protect wetland areas in the Philippines as part of its climate resilience strategy to safeguard communities from disasters and support livelihoods. Wetlands play a crucial role in protecting diverse ecosystems by providing shelter for migratory birds, fish and amphibians, including endangered and near-threatened species.

They also provide essential services for local communities such as flood mitigation, carbon sinks, and water quality maintenance. For agriculture, wetlands ensure fertile lands and reliable water sources for crops.

The list of Ramsar sites in the Philippines has recently expanded. The Sibugay Wetland Nature Reserve (SWNR) and the Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve (DCMR) in Siargao Island Protected Landscape and Seascape (SIPLAS) have been designated as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, making them the ninth and 10th Ramsar sites in the Philippines.

A Ramsar site is a wetland area designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, also known as “The Convention on Wetlands.” The international environmental treaty was signed on February 2, 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

“These Ramsar sites showcase our commitment to the National Adaptation Plan’s goal of protecting biodiversity and strengthening ecosystem services. The designation of the Sibugay Wetland Nature Reserve and Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve is a significant step toward achieving our adaptation targets,” said CCC vice chairperson and executive director Robert E.A. Borje.

The Sibugay Wetland Nature Reserve is an important habitat for thousands of migratory birds during the migratory season. Here, they rest, eat, drink and find safe refuge from predators. Its mudflats serve as a critical stopover for migratory shorebirds within the East Asia Australasian Flyway.

These include the endangered great knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*), Far Eastern curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*), the vulnerable Chinese egret (*Egretta eulophotes*) and the endemic Philippine duck (*Anas luzonica*).

Meanwhile, the Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve is home to a diverse collection of organisms, including species that are globally threatened or endemic to the Philippines and the Mindanao

region. These include the Philippine duck (*Anas luzonica*) and the southern rufous hornbill (*Buceros mindanensis*), and the two restricted-range species, namely the Mindanao hornbill (*Penelopides affinis*) and the yellowish bulbul (*Hypsipetes everetti*).

The mangroves in DCMR cover approximately 4,871 hectares or 53.2 percent of Siargao Island's total mangrove forest, providing nearby communities with protection against storm surges. It also supports local livelihood through food production and ecotourism activities.

The Philippines has been on the Ramsar List since 1994. It now has 10 Ramsar sites, namely Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Cebu Province (1994); Naujan Lake National Park in Oriental Mindoro (1999); Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary (1999);

Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park in Palawan (1999); Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park in Palawan (2012); Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area (2013); Negros Occidental Coastal Wetlands Conservation Area (2016); Sasmuan Pampanga Coastal Wetlands (2021); Sibugay Wetland Nature Reserve (2024); and Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve (2024). **CCC News**

<https://manilastandard.net/spotlight/environmental-and-sustainability/314536854/govt-bolsters-bid-to-protect-wetland-areas.html>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Processors: India meat ban to affect production

By Giselle P. Jordan

December 17, 2024

THE Philippine Association of Meat Processors Inc. (Pampi) is worried that a ban on meat imports from three Indian states — Bihar, Maharashtra and Telangana — will affect its production schedule for the first two months of 2025.

The group — composed of 83 member-companies in food manufacturing, packaging, cold chain logistics and infrastructure — on Monday sent a letter urging Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. to review and reverse a Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) order issuing a phytosanitary import clearance ban on beef imports from the three Indian states.

The order was issued following an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in those areas in 2023.

In its letter, Pampi said that its member-companies had already contracted suppliers of Indian buffalo meat (IBM) from the three states to fulfill production requirements for early next year. They argued that, in their years of importing buffalo meat from the three states since 1994, the products never caused any FMD issues despite sporadic outbreaks in India.

Pampi said there had not been any reported case of transmission of the FMD virus from Indian buffalo meat since DA-accredited suppliers and meat processors strictly follow the World Health Organization for Animal Health's guidelines on the importation of fresh meat of bovines from areas with FMD virus infection.

There is an official control program for FMD in India, Pampi said, adding that their suppliers and meat processors are compliant to the Terrestrial Animal Health Code of 2024.

While additional plants are being recommended for accreditation in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, a major FMD outbreak in cattle has also been reported in the area in March.

Uttar Pradesh has also been on the DA ban list since 2020, also due to FMD.

Pampi said the BAI order set a "disastrous precedent" that may lead it to lose India as its only source of buffalo raw meat.

The meat processors group suggested that the original arrangements on Indian buffalo meat importation be observed while the BAI order undergoes review.

The Manila Times tried to reach out to the DA and the BAI, but the agencies' representatives have yet to respond.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/17/business/top-business/processors-india-meat-ban-to-affect-production/2022692>

THE MANILA TIMES:

PH lifts ban on Japanese strawberries

By **Bernadette E. Tamayo**

December 16, 2024

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines has lifted the ban on the importation of fresh strawberries from Japan, the Japanese Embassy in Manila said.

The embassy said Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) made the announcement following discussions with concerned Philippine quarantine officials.

"Big news for strawberry lovers! Starting 15 December, Japan's juicy and sweet strawberries will finally make their way from Japan to the Philippines," Japanese Ambassador to Manila Endo Kazuya wrote on X (formerly Twitter).

"Thanks to the agreement between MAFF and Philippine authorities, these berry-delicious exports are good to go! Who's excited for this fruity milestone?" Endo said.

The MAFF has announced that "an agreement has been reached with the Philippine quarantine authorities regarding the export of fresh strawberries from Japan," the embassy posted on Facebook.

"The previous restriction was implemented due to concerns over pests associated with fresh strawberries from Japan," the embassy said.



Japanese workers prepare Japanese 'Amaou' strawberries for market at the Yame Strawberry Packaging Center in Nagamine city, Fukuoka province, Japan. EPA/EVERETT KENNEDY BROWN

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/16/news/ph-lifts-ban-on-japanese-strawberries/2022460>

THE MANILA TIMES:

DA, DTI sign pact to boost food exports

By Giselle P. Jordan

December 17, 2024

THE Departments of Agriculture (DA) and Trade and Industry (DTI) have signed a memorandum of agreement to boost the country's food exports and overcome market barriers.

In the agreement, the two government agencies committed to increasing demand for the country's key export products like bananas, mangoes, and seaweed, and promoting high-value crops such as coffee and cacao. Their overall aim is to reinforce the Philippines' leverage in global markets.

In September, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that \$492.6 million, or 9 percent of the country's total exports, are agricultural products.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the DA was proud to formalize the partnership with DTI. "Combining the resources and expertise of both agencies will unlock the full potential of Philippine agriculture," he said.

Through the agreement, the two agencies will work on trade promotion, strategic investments, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) empowerment, and resolving issues in market access and tariffs.

The pact also entails the establishment of an Agri-Export Help Desk and commodity councils that will resolve export-related concerns and enhance government and business coordination starting in 2025.

The DA's Export Development Office has been engaging in programs to expand the market of bananas, mangoes, seaweed, coconuts and durian, as well as coffee and cacao.

"This partnership is a step toward a prosperous and sustainable agricultural sector," said Tiu Laurel.

The agreement will also involve organizations like the Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. and the Philippine Food Processors and Exporters Organization Inc., among other stakeholders.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/17/business/top-business/da-dti-sign-pact-to-boost-food-exports/2022690>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA, DTI to boost PHL agri exports, tackle barriers

Ada Pelonia

December 17, 2024



File photo shows a farmer readying seedbeds for cacao seedlings in this nursery in Piñan, Zamboanga del Norte.

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) inked an agreement that aims to bolster Philippine agricultural exports and tackle market barriers.

The agencies signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that seeks to increase export sales of key commodities, including bananas, mangoes, and seaweed while promoting high-value crops like coffee and cacao.

Citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the DA said agro-based exports reached \$492.6 million or 8 percent of the country's total exports in September 2024.

“While reflecting progress, this figure highlights the sector's untapped potential,” it added.

According to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., merging the resources and expertise of both agencies would help unlock the full potential of Philippine agriculture.

“This partnership is a step toward a prosperous and sustainable agricultural sector,” Laurel said.

The DA noted that among the key objectives of the partnership are trade promotion, strategic investments, empowering small and medium enterprises, and resolving issues like market access and tariffs.

It added that the initiative will involve private sector stakeholders, including the Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc., and the Philippine Food Processors and Exporters Organization Inc.

The agency also said that its Export Development Office has launched programs to boost exports of bananas, mangoes, seaweed, coconuts, and durian. Emerging crops like coffee and cacao are also being prioritized.

As part of this collaboration, the DA said it will establish an Agri-Export Help Desk to manage export-related concerns and form commodity councils starting January 2025 to enhance coordination between government and private businesses.

“By improving market access and fostering innovation, the DA and DTI aim to position the Philippines as a global leader in food exports, benefiting farmers, fisherfolk, and other stakeholders across the value chain,” the DA said.

“The strategic alliance is expected to unlock new opportunities and drive sector-wide growth.”

Laurel earlier said that the consultative councils tasked to boost the output of each commodity will start to convene by mid-January next year.

He added that the councils of each agricultural commodity would bring together representatives from the agency, the private sector, farmers, and other key stakeholders.

Image credits: [Sherwin Manual](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/17/da-dti-to-boost-phl-agri-exports-tackle-barriers/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA nixes Pampi call to rescind BAI order halting clearances for Indian buffalo meat

Ada Pelonia
December 16, 2024

The Department of Agriculture (DA) thumbed down the call of Philippine Association of Meat Processors Inc. (PAMPI) to rescind an order issued by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) which halted the issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs) for buffalo meat from three states in India.

The DA suspended the issuance of SPSICs due to confirmed outbreaks of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in the states of Bihar, Maharashtra, and Telangana.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. confirmed that PAMPI sent him a letter appealing to rescind the memorandum.

“I got PAMPI’s letter thru Viber message,” Laurel told the BusinessMirror over the weekend.

“I told them that I cannot lift the ban on three states unless the Indian national competent authority declares the areas as FMD free,” he added.

BAI Officer-in-Charge Director Diosamia Sevilla recently issued a memorandum to temporarily suspend the review of SPSIC requests for Indian buffalo meat (IBM) from Bihar, Maharashtra, and Telangana.

The agency cited the DA’s inspection mission to the South Asian nation and subsequent findings from the Accreditation Review Body (ARB) wherein India’s national competent authority submitted reports of confirmed FMD cases in the said states.

The BAI said the order is pursuant to an administrative circular stipulating that only SPSIC applications from countries with no advisory of disease outbreaks, contaminations, and other SPS-related risks should be reviewed and placed “under review status.”

An SPSIC would certify that an inbound shipment is safe for human and animal consumption, and would not bring in any pests that could be detrimental to the local agriculture sector.

In the letter, PAMPI said it has IBM raw materials that have been contracted and are ready for shipment from those states to meet the production requirements in January and February next year.

It added that the SPSIC ban “will leave us with virtually no raw material inventory to process into canned goods by then.”

“We have been importing IBM materials from those states, notably Maharashtra and Telangana since 1994 and IBM imports never caused any FMD issue for our livestock population. This is notwithstanding the fact that sporadic FMD outbreaks did occur as FMD is endemic in India,” PAMPI said.

The meat processor also noted that there were no reported cases of transmission of the FMD virus from IBM for the past 30 years because DA-accredited suppliers and meat processors have been strictly following the guidelines set by the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) on the importation of fresh meat of bovines from countries or zones infected with FMD virus, where an official control program exists such as in India.

“The SPS ban on the three states will set a disastrous precedent as it will result in our industry losing India as the only source of buffalo meat raw material,” PAMPI said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/16/da-nixes-pampi-call-to-rescind-bai-order-halting-clearances-for-indian-buffalo-meat/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

No need to import: Tender-fresh duck meat is now locally produced

BMPlus

December 16, 2024

Capas, Tarlac – Imagine a future where tender, flavourful duck meat is sourced entirely from local farms—no imports needed. That future is now, thanks to **EDL Farms and Feed Manufacturing, Inc.**, a proudly Filipino company setting a new gold standard in premium-quality duck meat production.

With its innovative farm-to-table operation, EDL Farms has achieved what once seemed impossible—producing duck meat that meets the exacting standards of Michelin-starred chefs and premier dining establishments.

A Journey of Vision and Grit

Every revolution starts with a spark. For **Dr. Eulalio D. Lorenzo**, it began with a dream to uplift Filipino farmers. From his humble beginnings as a construction worker, Dr. Lorenzo's relentless drive led him to become a veterinarian and, later, a trailblazing entrepreneur.

In 2013, he saw an opportunity amidst the global bird flu outbreak. Filipino farmers were unable to meet the quality standards demanded by high-end restaurants. Determined to change this, Dr. Lorenzo imported genetically superior Pekin ducks from France's Grimaud Frères and established EDL Farms—a name now synonymous with excellence.

What Makes PRIMADUCK a Game-Changer?

- **Unmatched Quality: Each PRIMADUCK bird is bred with world-class genetics, ensuring every bite is tender and flavourful.**
- **Certified to Perfection: EDL Farms is the only NMIS-accredited duck farm in the Philippines, adhering to the highest global standards.**
- **Loved by Chefs: PRIMADUCK's rich, succulent meat has become the secret ingredient in dishes served at top restaurants.**

- **Built for Community: By working hand-in-hand with Filipino farmers, EDL Farms transforms livelihoods and strengthens communities.**
- **Sustainability at Heart: Every step, from breeding to delivery, is designed to protect the environment while delivering excellence.**

A Future Rooted in Filipino Pride

Before EDL Farms, chefs had to compromise with imported options. Now, with PRIMADUCK, the Philippines can proudly stand among the best in the world.

“PRIMADUCK is proof that we can dream big and achieve even bigger,” said Dr. Lorenzo. “It’s a product born out of passion, resilience, and the unwavering spirit of the Filipino people.”

Beyond Duck Meat: Building a Legacy

EDL Farms is not just transforming the food industry—it’s creating a ripple effect of empowerment. By integrating farmers into its value chain and forging partnerships nationwide, the company is building a robust agribusiness ecosystem that uplifts lives across the country.

At the heart of this transformation is Allan Casajeros, the Chief Operating Officer of EDL Farms and a driving force of innovation and progress. With years of expertise in animal science and nutrition, and as a licensed agriculturist, Casajeros combines visionary leadership with bold ideas. His commitment to advancing sustainable farming and agribusiness ensures EDL Farms delivers not just premium-quality duck meat but a legacy of excellence rooted in care for people, land, and future generations.

“Every PRIMADUCK product carries the soul of Filipino resilience and pride,” shares Allan. “This is more than just a business—it’s a beacon of what the Philippines can achieve when innovation meets heart. With every tender bite, we remind the world that the best is no longer imported—it’s proudly homegrown.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/16/no-need-to-import-tender-fresh-duck-meat-is-now-locally-produced/>

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:

EDITORIAL — Sayang ang NFA rice kung mabubulok lang

December 17, 2024 | 12:00am



KUNG sa mga restaurant at fastfoods ay maraming nasasayang na kanin, mas marami ang masasayang sa National Food Authority (NFA) kapag hindi nakagawa ng hakbang ang pamahalaan. Nasa anim na milyong sako ng bigas sa NFA ang mabubulok kapag hindi naipamahagi. Gaano karaming bibig ang mapapakain ng ganito karaming bigas. Gaano karaming bituka ang mapapatahimik ng ganito karaming bigas kapag naisaing? Tiyak marami ang mapapasaya.

Sinabi mismo ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na napakaraming nakaistak na bigas sa NFA at kung hindi madi-disposed ang mga ito, tiyak na mabubulok lamang. Matagal na umanong nakaistak ang anim na milyong sako ng bigas at maaaring mabulok na ang mga ito.

Payo ni Tiu Laurel, gumawa ng batas ang mga kongresista na papayagan ang NFA na maibenta ang mga nakaistak na bigas sa palengke. Kung maibebenta sa mga palengke, maraming tao ang makikinabang. Ibenta umano ito ng NFA sa murang halaga upang maabot ng mga mahihirap.

Halos ganito rin ang payo ni Agriculture Assistant Secretary at spokesman Arnel de Mesa na kailangang magkaroon ng kalayaan ang NFA na maibenta sa mga palengke ang nakaistak na bigas. Magkaroon aniya ng batas na papayagan ang NFA na maibenta ang bigas sa murang halaga. Ayon pa kay De Mesa, maaring maibenta ang NFA rice ng P30 per kilo. Nawalan daw ng kapangyarihan ang NFA mula nang ipatupad ang Rice Tariffication Law (RTL). Dahil sa RTL, nawala ang regulatory powers ng NFA sa pagdi-disposed ng bigas. Pinapayagan lamang umano ang NFA na ibenta ang kanilang stock sa Department of Social Welfare and Development, Office of Civil Defense at local government units (LGUs).

May katwirang mangamba si Secretary Tiu Laurel sa maraming bigas na nakaistak sa NFA dahil ayaw niyang may masayang. Kamakailan, sinabi niya 300,000 metriko tonelada ng bigas ang nasasayang taun-taon. Maghahain daw siya sa Kongreso ng panukalang batas na papayagang mag-serve ng kalahating cup ng kanin sa mga restaurant at fastfoods. Napakarami aniyang nasasayang dahil umo-order nang sobra-sobrang kanin ang mga customer pero hindi naman inuubos at tinatapon lamang sa basurahan. Ayon pa sa DA Secretary. panahon na raw para maging responsible ang mamamayan upang hindi masayang ang kanin.

Ang kasagutan o solusyon para hindi masayang o mabulok ang NFA rice ay nakasalalay sa mga mambabatas. Magpasa ng batas na hahayaan ang NFA na maibenta ang kanilang rice stock sa mga palengke sa murang halaga. Kaysa masayang lamang ang mga ito, mapakinabangan na ng mamamayan.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/opinyon/2024/12/17/2407962/editorial-sayang-ang-nfa-rice-kung-mabubulok-lang>