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MANILA BULLETIN:

DA chief Tiu Laurel weeds out bad eggs in private sector

BY [BEN ARNOLD DE VERA](#)

Dec 18, 2024 10:41 AM

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. is weeding out not only the bad eggs among agricultural importers but also underperformers in the Department of Agriculture's (DA) senior management team.

Tiu Laurel told reporters last Monday night, Dec. 16, that five more importers — three of fish, as well as two of meat products — would soon be part of the DA's blacklist. He didn't disclose their identities.

“And more are coming,” Tiu Laurel added.

To recall, the DA last Dec. 10 announced that during the last six months, it blacklisted 10 import companies which allegedly engaged in illegal trade and smuggling.

Tiu Laurel had noted that the number of firms blacklisted under his watch as DA chief already surpassed the preceding six years' total.

Republic Act (RA) No. 12022 or the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act enacted just last October is expected to enhance the DA and the Bureau of Customs' (BOC) enforcement powers against unscrupulous traders.

Alongside this anti-agricultural smuggling campaign, Tiu Laurel lamented that at least two high-ranking DA officials, who he did not identify, haven't met his “quite high” expectations yet.

Tiu Laurel is DA chief for only over a year now, or since November 2023 when President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.—who also served as Agriculture Secretary when he assumed office in July 2022—appointed him to the position.

“Ang ayaw ko lang sa kanila, ako pa ang kailangang tumutok para matapos [The only thing I don't like about them, is that I'm the one who has to focus to get things done],” Tiu Laurel disclosed.

Tiu Laurel revealed he's giving his two subordinates a six-month ultimatum, or until the middle of next year to shape up.

Despite his warning to these officials, Tiu Laurel is hopeful they won't get demoralized and would be able to catch up.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/12/18/da-chief-targets-bad-eggs-in-private-sector>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

P300 million fund sought for bird flu vaccine

Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas, Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

December 19, 2024 | 12:00am



This photo shows a photo of chickens. STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is seeking P300 million to purchase 30 million doses of vaccines against avian influenza (AI) or bird flu to strengthen the local poultry industry’s protection against the transboundary animal disease.

“We are doing the trials now and we are looking for the budget. The vaccine for AI could be released by March next year,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

“Once that comes out, we would need a budget of P300 million,” Tiu Laurel added.

The target of the government’s AI vaccination drive will be layers or chickens that lay eggs, according to the agriculture chief.

He said the policy guidelines for the AI vaccination are still being formulated.

Tiu Laurel disclosed that the DA has ongoing talks with Boehringer Ingelheim with regard to the bird flu vaccine.

He said the German pharmaceutical firm was the first to express intention to supply bird flu vaccines to the Philippines.

Boehringer Ingelheim currently supplies France with bird flu vaccines.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/12/19/2408452/p300-million-fund-sought-bird-flu-vaccine>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA firm on carabeef import ban from three Indian states

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

December 19, 2024 | 12:00am



MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is standing pat on its decision to ban the importation of buffalo meat from three Indian states, citing the need to protect local livestock population against foot-and-mouth disease (FMD).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he has already responded to the appeal made by Philippine Association of Meat Processors Inc. (PAMPI) regarding the ban imposed on imports of Indian buffalo meat (IBM) from the states of Bihar, Maharashtra and Telangana.

Tiu Laurel said he could not lift the import ban since the presence of FMD in the three states were confirmed by the DA inspection mission (DAIM) as well as by the Indian government itself through an official document.

“The suppliers in the three areas knew that there was an FMD there already and yet they did not tell us. If they (PAMPI) can get a document that says that these areas are FMD-free then we can lift [the ban],” he said.

The agriculture chief said 18 percent of the samples taken by the DAIM in the three states tested positive with FMD.

PAMPI earlier appealed to Tiu Laurel to reconsider the ban imposed on the three Indian states, claiming that it would cause supply disruptions to the industry by the first quarter of next year.

PAMPI argued 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 group also argued that the DA should also ban the importation of IBM from the state of Uttar Pradesh, citing the presence of FMD based on reports of International Society for Infectious Diseases and mainstream media in India.

However, Tiu Laurel explained that the DAIM did not find the existence of FMD in Uttar Pradesh, hence, there is no basis to ban IBM imports from the Indian state.

The Indian government also did not officially report to the Philippines that there is FMD in Uttar Pradesh, he added.

“I told them why not just buy from the new accredited plants? Why are you pushing for banned plants and areas? Why are you pushing me to allow areas proven to have FMD as tested by the Indian government,” he recalled telling a PAMPI representative.

The DA has expanded the number of accredited foreign meat establishments (FMEs) in India allowed to export IBM to the Philippines to 34 from the previously just six FMEs.

However, 13 of the accredited FMEs will not be able to immediately export carabeef to the Philippines since they are located in the three Indian states with FMD.

According to Tiu Laurel, he would allow the importation of boiled carabeef from the FMEs in the FMD-affected Indian states if they have the capacity to do so.

“If they can do that, I will allow it,” he said, citing the case of Pakistan exporting boiled carabeef to China.

Tiu Laurel explained that the expansion of accredited FMEs to export IBM to the Philippines is meant to increase competition in the domestic market with the goal of driving down costs of imported meat products.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/12/19/2408294/da-firm-carabeef-import-ban-three-indian-states>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

SMC named top firm desired by Filipino jobseekers

[Catherine Talavera](#) - The Philippine Star

December 19, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — San Miguel Corp. (SMC) emerged as the top company in the country that Filipino job seekers desire to be employed in, according to a survey by online job portal Jobstreet by SEEK.

Results of the recent Employee Job Happiness Index 2024 survey revealed that SMC is the most sought-after private company by Filipino jobseekers, followed by Accenture and Ayala Corp.

Other companies such as Google, JP Morgan Chase & Co., SM Development Corp. Nestle, Globe, P&G, Aboitiz, Amazon, BDO Unionbank and Emapta were also included on the list of sought-after private companies by candidates.

On the other hand, the Asian Development Bank was voted as the most sought-after government agency or non-government organization (NGO) to work for by Filipino jobseekers. This was followed by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and the Department of Education.

Included on the list of government agencies and NGOs as well are the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the United Nations, the Department of Health, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Government Service Insurance System, Department of Agriculture, the US Embassy, Commission on Audit, Philippine Ports Authority and the Department of Finance, among others.

Jobseekers ranked work schedule or location, company reputation, and company values as the top traits they are looking for in their search for a new company or organization to work with, according to Jobstreet.

It added that they also considered the work culture, monetary and non-monetary benefits, and job security, among others.

The online job portal emphasized that 38 percent of Filipino job seekers also identified media, which covers social media, news, and printed/online articles, as the main platforms they use to learn more about the companies they want to join.

In addition, 17 percent cited the company's website, while 14 percent said they learned about the companies through word of mouth.

“Therefore, hirers are advised to make their company initiatives more visible on these channels as well as in professional job platforms to attract potential employees,” Jobstreet said.

In terms of retaining talent, survey results showed that salary increases (39 percent), better working hours/time flexibility (13 percent), getting a promotion (13 percent), and holiday/vacation leaves (12 percent) are the main needle-movers in boosting employee morale within a company, with employees saying that they would be happier in the next six months if they are to receive these benefits.

“Hirers may consider these benefits as drivers toward employee retention, as keeping morale within an organization helps preserve job satisfaction and in turn, employee retention,” Jobstreet said.

It added that these benefits may also attract future job seekers in the long run, as employees may be inspired to share their positive experiences with people around them.

“We at Jobstreet by SEEK believe that hirers may reach a whole new pool of potential talent to their organizations by considering new approaches to hiring and promoting open positions,” Jobstreet by SEEK managing director for the Philippines Dannah Majarocon said.

“We also continue to provide hirers tips and guidance on how to promote their companies in various platforms, while also providing jobseekers some key skills in promoting their talent,” she added.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/12/19/2408316/smc-named-top-firm-desired-filipino-jobseekers>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Philippines negotiating rice supply deals with Pakistan, India

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

December 19, 2024 | 12:00am



Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

STAR / Jesse Bustos

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is in talks with the governments of Pakistan and India for rice supply deals to meet the Philippines’ import requirements and create a more competitive market.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said yesterday that the DA is in talks with envoys from Pakistan and India to get commitments for the supply of two million metric tons (MT) of rice to meet the Philippines’ import requirements, if needed.

Tiu Laurel met with Pakistani Ambassador Imtiaz Ahmad Kazi to finalize a memorandum of understanding, under which the South Asian country would allocate for the Philippines up to one million metric tons of rice annually, according to the DA.

The DA said similar negotiations are underway with India.

“The intention is to create a level playing field among our rice supplying nations,” Tiu Laurel said.

“We want them to compete for our market,” he added.

The prospective supply deals align with President Marcos’ goal of diversifying the country’s rice sources and reducing the cost of the staple, making it more affordable for consumers, according to the DA.

Currently, Vietnam is the Philippines' primary rice supplier, accounting for at least 75 percent of annual import volume.

In January, the Philippines and Vietnam signed an agreement for a five-year rice quota of 1.5 million to two million metric tons, the DA said.

Last month, Kazi disclosed that Pakistan wants to increase its share in the Philippines' rice market by forging a bilateral memorandum of agreement with the government.

Kazi said the South Asian country stands ready to expand its rice exports to the country to as much as one million MT.

“We want to increase that share, provided we can also provide a stable, good supply of rice. And that depends on mutual conditions for each other, which means that the Philippines should guarantee us that they want this much rice every year,” he said.

Under a memorandum of agreement, Kazi said Pakistan would have a guarantee of the volume that would enter the country in a given year.

The idea of forging a MOA between Manila and Islamabad came up last year during initial talks between the foreign ministers of the two countries, Kazi added.

The country has imported almost 4.5 million metric tons of rice as of Dec. 12, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry.

Data showed that the top rice supplier was Vietnam at 3.43 million MT, followed by Thailand and Pakistan at 567,913 MT and 244,859 MT, respectively.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/12/19/2408324/philippines-negotiating-rice-supply-deals-pakistan-india>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

First severe bird flu case in US sparks alarm

Agence France-Presse / 06:58 AM December 19, 2024



(AFP / file photo)

WASHINGTON – An elderly patient in Louisiana is in “critical condition” with severe [avian influenza](#), US authorities announced Wednesday, the first serious human case in the country as fears grow of a possible bird flu pandemic.

The new case brings the total number of infections in the United States during the current 2024 outbreak to 61, as California declared an emergency in order to ramp up its response.

Prior patients experienced mild symptoms and recovered at home. But the severity of the Louisiana case has heightened alarm, echoing similar cases worldwide. Last month, a teenager in Canada was also hospitalized with a severe case of [bird flu](#).

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Louisiana patient was exposed to sick and dead birds in backyard flocks.

“The patient is experiencing severe respiratory illness related to H5N1 infection and is currently hospitalized in critical condition,” the Louisiana health department said in a statement to AFP, adding the person has underlying medical conditions and is over the age of 65.

“Over the 20-plus years of global experience with this virus, H5 infection has previously been associated with severe illness in other countries, including illnesses that resulted in death in up to 50 percent of cases,” Demetre Daskalakis, a senior CDC official told reporters on a call.

“The demonstrated potential for this virus to cause severe illness in people continues to highlight the importance of the joint... US federal response,” he added.

Meanwhile the most populous US state California announced a state of emergency.

“This proclamation is a targeted action to ensure government agencies have the resources and flexibility they need to respond quickly to this outbreak,” Governor Gavin Newsom said in a statement, vowing to expand the state’s monitoring system and support the agriculture sector.

Mounting concerns

The Louisiana case was confirmed last Friday, according to the CDC. Genetic sequencing revealed that the H5N1 virus in the patient belonged to the D1.1 genotype.

This genotype has recently been detected in wild birds and poultry in the United States, and in human cases reported in Washington state and in the Canadian case, in British Columbia province.

The D1.1 genotype differs from the B3.13 genotype, which has been identified in dairy cows, some poultry outbreaks, and human cases with mild symptoms such as conjunctivitis.

A handful of US cases have had no known animal source of infection, including a case in Delaware, the CDC reported on Wednesday.

Rebecca Christofferson, a scientist at Louisiana State University, told AFP that the lack of robust surveillance makes it uncertain whether more animal-to-human spillovers are going undetected or if asymptomatic human-to-human transmission is occurring.

“I’m not panicking yet,” she said, while emphasizing the need for increased vigilance.

But Meg Schaeffer, an epidemiologist at the US-based SAS Institute, told AFP recently there were now several factors suggesting that “avian flu is knocking on our door and could start a new pandemic any day.”

Experimental vaccine

The US has stockpiled bird flu vaccines in preparation for potential human transmission, and on Wednesday, a new study revealed promising results for an experimental mRNA vaccine that successfully protected ferrets from the virus.

The current US outbreak of the flu — technically the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, or H5N1 bird flu — was first reported in March in dairy cows.

US cases have included a young child in California, reported last month.

Compounding concerns is the possible role of raw milk as a vector for transmission.

The US Department of Agriculture issued a new federal order requiring that raw milk samples be shared on request from any dairy farm and milk transporter, and mandating that any samples testing positive for bird flu be reported to federal authorities.

Uncertainty looms over how the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump will address the outbreak.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/258745/first-severe-bird-flu-case-in-us-sparks-alarm>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

PH eyes deal with India, Pakistan on rice imports

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:56 AM December 19, 2024

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is in the middle of negotiations with both Pakistan and India to provide a stable supply of 2 million metric tons (MT) of rice to the country annually.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he had met with Pakistani Ambassador to the Philippines Imtiaz Kazi to finalize a memorandum of understanding. Under the proposed arrangement, Pakistan will export to the Philippines up to one million MT of rice annually, equivalent to about 25 percent of the latter's rice import requirement. The DA is working on a similar accord with India.

“The intention is to create a level playing field among our rice-supplying nations,” Tiu Laurel said during a consultation meeting with rice traders at the Intercity Industrial Estate in Bulacan.

“We want them to compete for our market,” he added.

Last month, the Pakistani envoy expressed his country's interest in forging a partnership with the Philippines on rice importation. In particular, traders from Pakistan seek “stability and certainty” on the quantity of rice to be shipped to Manila, citing fluctuating tariffs levied by the government and competitive global prices.

“We want to increase that share, provided we can also provide the stable good supply of rice and that depends on mutual concessions for each other, which means that the Philippines should guarantee us that they want this much rice every year,” Kazi said.

<https://business.inquirer.net/497420/ph-eyes-deal-with-india-pakistan-on-rice-imports>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Despite typhoons, PH palay output likely rose by 2.8% in Q4 – PSA

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 12:34 PM December 18, 2024



Farmer sorting his palay harvest. (Image from the Department of Agriculture website)

The country likely produced more palay (unmilled rice) in the last quarter of this year despite the devastating impact of recent typhoons on local farms.

Palay production was pegged at 7.44 million metric tons (MT) in the October to December period, up by 2.8 percent period from the actual output of 7.24 million MT in the same period a year ago, based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

The projection, however, was 2.3 percent lower than its estimate of 7.61 million MT as of Oct. 1.

The total harvest area increased by 2.8 percent to 1.8 million hectares (ha) while the yield per hectare remained at 4.13 MT.

Some 54.9 percent or 998,953 ha of crops have been harvested, equivalent to 4.18 million MT.

Of the 811,328 ha of standing palay crops for harvest, 66.1 percent were at the maturing stage while 30.4 percent were at the reproductive stage. The remaining 3.5 percent reached the vegetative stage.

The DA expected domestic palay output to end at 19.3 million MT by the end of this year as the El Niño and La Niña weather phenomena severely affected farm production.

If the estimate is met, the projected volume will mark a decrease of almost 4 percent from the record high of 20.06 million MT last year.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said they were hoping to breach the record-high palay output in 2023, noting the increase in irrigated areas and funds following the signing of the amended Rice Tariffication Law.

“But then of course, for 2025, we look forward to 2025. The La Niña and El Niño are over, but of course, the regular storms will be coming back to us,” Tiu Laurel Jr. said in an interview on Monday evening.

“I think the DA is ready for next year. We’re hoping to break (the record palay output of) 20.06 million metric tons next year,” he told reporters.

The DA’s palay output forecast was around the same level as the domestic milled production of 12 million MT projected this year by the US Department of Agriculture.

Meanwhile, the PSA said corn production might have dropped by 1.5 percent to 1.93 million MT in the fourth quarter of 2025 from 1.96 million MT a year ago.

The estimated volume was likewise a decrease of 1.9 percent from 1.97 million MT as of Oct. 1.

The total harvest area is seen to go down by 3.5 percent to 598,776 ha but the yield per hectare was projected to rise by 1.9 percent to 3.22 MT.

About 278,658 ha or 46.5 percent of corn crops have been harvested, amounting to 1 million MT.

Of the 320,118 ha of corn farms up for harvest, 55.2 percent were at the maturing stage, 42.1 percent were at the reproductive stage and the other 2.7 percent were at the vegetative stage.

<https://business.inquirer.net/497242/despite-typhoons-ph-palay-output-likely-rose-by-2-8-in-q4-psa>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA ratchets up efforts to sell subsidized rice

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:08 PM December 18, 2024



The Department of Agriculture (DA) is exerting more efforts to bring down rice prices such as expanding its Rice-for-All program to other public markets and offering other varieties by next year.

Launched last August, the program is intended to make well-milled rice available to the public at P40 a kilo.

This initiative was initially rolled out in select Kadiwa stores in Metro Manila before the agency expanded its coverage to address persistently high retail prices.

The DA has expanded the program by deploying Kadiwa ng Pangulo kiosks that sell lower-priced rice at 10 public markets and four Metro Rail Transit Line 3 (MRT) and Light Rail Manila Transit Line 1 (LRT) stations.

“The reception in public markets for the consumers is good but the problem is it looks like some market masters do not want to accommodate our kiosks,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in an interview on Monday evening.

Tiu Laurel said rice retailers were complaining, noting that the DA's selling price for the staple grain is much lower than the prevailing market price of P48 to P52 per kg.

“Their sales have decreased a lot. There is a direct competition. But the reality is we have to compete. We talked to them three weeks ago to lower their selling price to P42 per kilogram. They agreed but did not follow through on what we had agreed on,” he told reporters.

Tiu Laurel said he is approaching mayors in the metropolis to convince market masters to set up Kadiwa kiosks in their respective public markets.

So far, the mayors of Quezon City, Pasay, Caloocan, Manila, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Malabon, Navotas, Marikina and Valenzuela are on board with the program.

He said the DA has yet to initiate talks with the local executives of San Juan, Pasig, Taguig, Pateros, Mandaluyong and Muntinlupa.

According to the agriculture chief, the agency is looking at further lowering the selling price to P38-P39 per kg by next year.

The Office of the President already authorized the DA to use the P5 billion budget to implement Rice-for-All and P29 rice programs, which sells rice at discounted prices to vulnerable sectors including senior citizens, persons with disabilities, solo parents and indigents.

“Starting January, I said, latest Jan. 15, we will be buying rice from, say, the traders, the farmers, farmer co-ops, from the importers and sell it through the Kadiwa ng Pangulo at hopefully P38 to P39 [per kilo],” Tiu Laurel said.

The DA is working on the rollout of new rice varieties called “sulit rice” and “nutri rice” that will be sold for P36 and P38 per kg, respectively, come 2025.

Tiu Laurel said the sulit rice variety, targeted to be released by January next year, is white and 100 percent broken but “comes from the good variety.”

On the other hand, nutri rice is brown and will hit the markets by the second quarter of 2025.

Meanwhile, Tiu Laurel said the DA plans to submit to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. by Friday a draft bill seeking to regain the National Food Authority's regulatory powers.

“I think with just the right budget and the right policy that NFA be allowed to sell its palay or rice to intervene. That's enough,” he added.

<https://business.inquirer.net/497264/da-ratchets-up-efforts-to-sell-subsidized-rice>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Satellite imaging tapped in drought mapping project

December 18, 2024 | 9:00 pm



THE Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA) said it will collaborate with the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) to create drought maps using satellite imaging.

“This agreement aims to create crop-specific drought maps from satellite data, with a focus on rice,” PhilSa said in a statement on Tuesday.

“The signing of this agreement formalizes secure and efficient data sharing between the two agencies for enhanced drought mitigation,” PhilSa said.

The project is expected to assist PhilRice — an arm of the Department of Agriculture — in improving plans to make farming more resilient.

“This collaboration with PhilRice underpins the importance of integrating satellite and ground data, emphasizing how ground data is used to validate, calibrate, and enhance the accuracy of satellite-derived insights and models,” Gay Jane P. Perez, deputy director general for space science and technology, said during the memorandum of agreement signing on Dec. 16.

The collaboration will help maximize the impact of PhilSA’s Satellite Mission Analysis, Planning, Product Enhancement and Development project.

As of August, agricultural damage due to the El Niño dry spell was reckoned at P15.3 billion. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/12/18/642459/satellite-imaging-tapped-in-drought-mapping-project/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Pakistan, India in talks with PHL for rice supply deals

December 18, 2024 | 8:59 pm



REUTERS

By **Adrian H. Halili**, *Reporter*

THE Department of Agriculture said on Wednesday that it is looking to enter into rice supply deals with Pakistan and India for volume of about 2 million metric tons (MMT) combined.

In a statement, Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said that the agency is planning to sign memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with the two countries, which are currently minor rice suppliers to the Philippines. The arrangements are designed “to create a level playing field among our rice supplying nations. We want them to compete for our market.”

Mr. Laurel said he met with Pakistan’s ambassador to Manila to finalize an MoU. Under the terms of the pending deal, Pakistan is expected to ship up to 1 MMT of rice annually.

Ambassador Imtiaz Ahmad Kazi has said that Pakistan is looking to expand its shipments of rice to the Philippines if Manila commits to taking up a guaranteed volume of imports.

Mr. Laurel said a “similar negotiation is under way with India.”

In October, the Indian government lifted its ban on non-basmati white rice exports, citing ample inventory levels. The ban had been imposed last year to guarantee sufficient domestic supply for India.

India is the world's largest exporter of white rice. Vietnam is currently the Philippines' primary foreign rice supplier.

In January, the Philippines and Vietnam signed a five-year agreement setting a shipment quota of between 1.5 MMT and 2 MMT.

The Philippines is projected to remain the top rice importer in the world, according to the US Department of Agriculture. It is expected to import about 5.4 MMT of rice next year.

Rice imports hit 4.48 MMT in the year to date as of Dec. 12, the Bureau of Plant Industry reported.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/12/18/642456/pakistan-india-in-talks-with-phl-for-rice-supply-deals/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Indian buffalo meat suppliers accredited amid foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks

December 18, 2024 | 8:58 pm



REUTERS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it accredited 34 Indian suppliers of buffalo meat (carabeef), authorizing them to continue shipping to the Philippines, though 13 located in Indian states with active foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreaks remain barred for the moment.

“The move is aimed at broadening the sourcing options for Philippine food processors and potentially lowering costs for Filipino consumers, particularly for products like corned beef,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said in a statement on Wednesday.

The DA has a current ban on buffalo meat from the Indian states of Bihar, Maharashtra, and Telangana, following the detection of FMD there.

“To protect local cattle and livestock, the DA has imposed an import ban on meat from these three states,” the agency said.

India is the Philippines’ sole source of imported buffalo meat.

The Philippines typically imports about 40% of its buffalo meat needs to augment domestic production.

“We do not intend to increase imports. What we want is to encourage more foreign companies to compete for our market, which will ultimately drive down the cost of imported agricultural products, benefiting consumers,” Mr. Laurel added.

He added that all 34 Indian exporters met the Philippines' requirements, though 13 companies in the three states remain subject to the ban pending the end of the outbreak.

“Imports of carabeef from these regions will be prohibited until India's national competent authority declares them free from FMD,” the DA said.

The DA added that it will not grant exemptions for heat-treated products, with the accreditation applying specifically to the trade in frozen carabeef.

Mr. Laurel said that if India applies a method of boiling carabeef to address FMD concerns — similar to the process Pakistan uses for buffalo meat it exports to China — he would consider allowing such imports.

“If they can do that, I will allow it,” he added.

According to the National Meat Inspection Service, all 34 companies met international food safety standards, including Good Manufacturing Practices and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/12/18/642455/indian-buffalo-meat-suppliers-accredited-amid-foot-and-mouth-disease-outbreaks/>

REMATE:

Rice imports ng PH gov't aabot sa 4.7 million MT kasunod ng mga kalamidad – DA

December 18, 2024 14:44



MANILA, Philippines- Posibleng umabot sa itinaturing na all-time high na 4.7 million metric tons (MMT) angangkat na bigas sa pagtatapos ng taon para kontrahin ang epekto ng mga natural disaster sa local palay production sa bansa.

Sa katunayan, ayon sa Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), ang aktuwal na ‘import arrivals’ ay tumama na sa 4.48 MMT hanggang noong Dec. 12.

“Sa ngayon, iyon ay tama lang dahil nakaranas tayo ng maraming problema this year. Sabi nga ni Secretary (Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.), this is the most depressing year for agriculture because of so many calamities, both natural and tsaka iyong sa sakit. El Niño, and then, series of typhoons, La Niña,” ang sinabi ni DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa sa isang panayam.

Tinukoy nito ang pangangailangan para sa merkado na mag-adjust.

“Alam nila kung kailan kailangang magdagdag. The market will adjust dahil mababa iyong production, they will get those deficiency sa importation,” ani de Mesa.

Sa pagtataya ng Rice Program projects ng DA, may 19.3 MMT palay production para ngayong taon, bumaba 20.06 MMT palay output noong nakaraang taon.

Ang tinatayang import volume ay makapagbibigay ng sapat na rice stocks hanggang sa susunod na harvest season o pag-aani.

“Yung imports, good for us to have three-months supplyng bigas until next year, which will be enough to carry us out until (the) next harvest season,” aniya pa rin.

Sa kabilang dako, sinabi ni de Mesa na mas maraming rice imports ang idineklara bunsod ng binawasang taripa , 15% mula sa 35% at napigilan ang smuggling ng produkto.

“Dahil wala nang insentibo para sa smugglers na mag-smuggle pa dahil sa mababang taripa, ngayon pumapasok na talaga sa actual recording iyong mga pumapasok na bigas at hindi na dumadaan pa sa ibang channel,” ang sinabi ni de Mesa.

Samantala, mula nang ipalabas ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. ang Executive Order (EO) 62 noong Hunyo, ang dami ng dumating na imported rice ay lumampas sa 100,000-MT level noong Hunyo at Hulyo, na may ‘highest arrivals’ na naiulat noong Oktubre na may 572,073 MT.

Para sa ‘first half’ ng Disyembre, nakapagtala ang BPI ng 158,988 MT ng imported rice. **Kris Jose**

<https://remate.ph/rice-imports-ng-ph-govt-aabot-sa-4-7-million-mt-kasunod-ng-mga-kalamidad-da/>

STANDARD:

DA in talks with Pakistan, India for 2m tons of imported rice



By **Othel V. Campos**

December 18, 2024, 7:45 pm

Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said Wednesday the agency is in discussions with envoys from Pakistan and India to secure commitments for a combined 2 million metric tons (MT) of rice, ensuring the Philippines can meet its import needs if required.

Tiu Laurel said talks with Pakistan were nearing completion, with a memorandum of understanding expected to allocate up to 1 million MT of rice annually—equivalent to 25 percent of the Philippines’ rice import requirement. Similar negotiations with India are ongoing, he said.

“The intention is to create a level playing field among our rice supplying nations,” Tiu Laurel said during a consultation meeting with rice traders at the Intercity Industrial Estate in Bocaue, Bulacan.

“We want them to compete for our market,” he said during a consultation with rice traders at the Intercity Industrial Estate in Bulacan.

The initiative supports President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s strategy to diversify rice sources and reduce costs for consumers.

While Vietnam remains the Philippines' top supplier, with its commitment to a five-year rice quota of 1.5 to 2 million metric tons, broadening partnerships is seen as a way to stabilize supply and pricing.

Intercity rice traders pledged during the consultation in Bocaue their support for the DA's Rice-for-All program.

They committed to selling rice at P40 per kilo through the KADIWA ng Pangulo initiative. Their commitment will help the DA reach its target of 300 KADIWA kiosks offering affordable rice in public markets and transport hubs by mid-January.

Tiu Laurel underscored the DA's collaboration with rice traders and international suppliers as essential to ensuring food security and affordability.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314537675/da-in-talks-with-pakistanindia-for-2m-tons-of-imported-rice.html>

MANILA STANDARD:

Gov't accredits 34 Indian buffalo meat suppliers



DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

By Othel V. Campos

December 18, 2024, 7:55 pm

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. said Wednesday the agency approved the accreditation of 34 Indian companies to supply frozen buffalo meat, locally known as carabeef.

The DA is looking at expanding sourcing options for Philippine food processors and potentially lowering consumer costs for products such as corned beef.

“Our goal is not to increase imports but to encourage competition among foreign suppliers. This will drive down the cost of imported agricultural products, benefiting Filipino consumers,” Tiu Laurel said.

The newly accredited companies include six exporters initially approved in 2019, with accreditation valid until Dec. 12, 2027.

The DA confirmed that all companies passed rigorous inspections conducted by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) and the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS).

It said 13 of the 34 companies, operating in Maharashtra, Telangana and Bihar, were barred from exporting due to active foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreaks in these states.

Tiu Laurel assured the public that carabeef imports from these regions would remain prohibited until India's National Competent Authority declares them FMD-free.

The DA said it is open to exploring new import processes to address FMD risks.

Laurel noted that if India implements heat treatment methods, similar to Pakistan's approach for buffalo meat exports to China, these products could be allowed.

The decision to accredit more exporters supports local meat processors, who depend on affordable carabeef to produce low-cost products, the agency said.

The Philippines imports about 40 percent of its carabeef needs to meet market demand.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314537681/govt-accredits-34-indian-buffalo-meat-suppliers.html>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Vizcaya mango council created

By Leander C. Domingo

December 19, 2024

BAGABAG, Nueva Vizcaya —To boost the "sweet gold" industry in the province, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) created the Nueva Mango Industry Development Council in partnership with the Department of Agriculture-Nueva Vizcaya Experiment Station (DA-NVES) and the Nueva Vizcaya local government.

DTI Nueva Vizcaya Director Michael Paggabao said the agency and its partners recently conducted a meeting cum focus group discussion at the DA-NVES Training Center in Villaros village here to revive the mango industry of the province.

"The objective of the gathering was to strengthen the promotion and development of the province's mango industry by identifying key challenges faced by farmers and devising effective strategies for overcoming these issues," Paggabao said.



Photo shows the participants during the event where the Nueva Vizcaya Mango Industry Development Council was created. DTI PHOTO

The event was participated by key stakeholders, including mango growers, industry experts and local government leaders "who collectively worked toward crafting a strategic plan aimed at enhancing production, improving marketing strategies and ensuring the sustainability of the industry," he said.]

Paggabao added the collaboration is crucial in revitalizing Nueva Vizcaya's mango industry and reclaiming its position in the market.

In underscoring the significant impact this collective effort will have on the industry's growth and promotion, he highlighted the value of partnerships among the provincial government, national agencies, the private sector and other stakeholders.

During the meeting, the DA-NVES also presented an overview of the current status of Nueva Vizcaya's mango industry.

DA-NVES manager Arsenio Apostol said the province's climate, elevation and other favorable characteristics make it an ideal location for mango production.

Apostol added that Nueva Vizcaya in the past ranked among the top 10 mango producers in the Philippines and underscored the significant potential of the industry if revived.

Together with engineer Giovannie Magat, provincial environment and natural resources officer, Apostol reiterated the commitment to supporting the long-term development of the mango industry, focusing on improving the livelihoods of local farmers.

Paggabao also underscored that as the Nueva Vizcaya Mango Industry Development Council takes its first steps, "the development of a comprehensive strategic action plan, which includes the registration and accreditation of the organized group, is set to follow."

"Aiming to foster sustainable growth in the mango industry while providing enhanced livelihood opportunities for farmers and with a unified vision, Nueva Vizcaya's mango industry is well-positioned to reclaim its status as the province's 'sweet gold,' driving economic growth and prosperity for years to come," he said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/19/business/agribusiness/vizcaya-mango-council-created/2024183>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Davao farmer to represent PH in Paris event

By Philippine News Agency
December 19, 2024

DAVAO CITY — A cacao farmer from this city is among the three selected to represent the Philippines in the prestigious Cacao of Excellence program next year in Paris, France, the Department of Agriculture (DA) Davao Region office announced Tuesday.

David Christopher Delaserna of Tugbok District was chosen as one of the three finalists out of 29 cacao bean entries submitted nationwide for the Philippine Cacao Quality Award (PCQA).

The other two representatives are Bayani Garcia of Barangay Bagakay in Barili, Cebu, and Osmeña Tajo of Barangay Dagum in Calbayog City, Samar.

Marie Ann Constantino, DA Davao Region technical director for operations, said the PCQA highlights the region's and the country's excellence in cacao production on the local, national and international levels.

"Go for gold is this year's theme, as the Philippines aims at garnering multiple golds at the Cacao of Excellence 2025 and surpassing the achievements made in 2021," she said.

In 2021, three entries from the Philippines were recognized among the 50 Best Beans in the World, with two farmers winning gold awards and one receiving silver.

The biennial Cacao of Excellence competition aims to position Philippine cacao as a global standard for bean quality, promote sustainable farming practices and empower local cacao-producing communities.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/19/business/agribusiness/davao-farmer-to-represent-ph-in-paris-event/2024182>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Searca supports 'lambanog' producers

By Leander C. Domingo

December 19, 2024

THE Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) recently organized a Lakbay Aral, or exposure and learning trip, for Quezon coconut farmers to lambanog processing sites in Tayabas City.

Some 20 farmers from the municipalities of Catanauan, Lopez, Candelaria and Sariaya participated in the activity "to improve the farmers' skills and knowledge in value-addition, specifically in lambanog production," according to Searca.

The initiative is under the project titled "Development of Coconut Industry Growth Areas in the Province of Quezon."

The farmers learned about the different stages of lambanog production, such as fermentation, distillation and packaging. They also interacted with industry experts to gain insights on sustainable and profitable practices in lambanog production.

Searca said the initiative highlights the center's commitment "to supporting farmers by introducing them to innovative agricultural practices and market opportunities, fostering the growth of the coconut industry in the province."

One of the sites visited was the Mallari Distillery where participants were given a guided tour of the facilities.

The farmers also learned about the technical aspects of production and were introduced to the rich history of the Mallari Distillery, one of the region's oldest and most renowned lambanog producers.

Gaining insights into the origins of Mallari Distillery, its journey toward becoming a successful enterprise and the strategies employed to sustain operations and maintain product quality over the years, their visit also provided technical knowledge and inspired them to explore entrepreneurial ventures.

The visit also emphasized the potential for success in the coconut industry through innovation, dedication and adherence to high standards.

At the Mallari Distillery shop, the farmers also explored a variety of lambanog products, including both traditional and flavored variants, and other product offerings. They also gained insights into the innovative approaches used to diversify and enhance the appeal of lambanog.

Beyond sampling flavored lambanog, participants explored branding and marketing strategies focusing on effective promotion techniques, packaging design, brand positioning and digital platform utilization.

Another site visited was the Greenlife Coconut Products Philippines Inc., where participants had the opportunity to observe the production process of lambanog and the company's innovative technologies using cost-effective yet equally durable materials compared to traditional options.

A relatively new enterprise, Greenlife also shared insights into its journey in lambanog production and how it has successfully kept pace with established industry players, underscoring its continuous efforts "to develop innovative and competitive products that meet the demands of the modern market."

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/19/business/agribusiness/searca-supports-lambanog-producers/2024181>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Ecija farmers, LGUs get farm machines

By The Manila Times
December 19, 2024

A NUMBER of farmers cooperatives and associations, and local government units (LGUs) in Nueva Ecija received agricultural machines at no cost under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF)-Mechanization Program.

The farm machines worth a total of P19 million were distributed to the beneficiaries on Dec. 13 in Muñoz.

During the distribution activity, Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization Deputy Director Joel Dator emphasized the need for the agency's Facility Management and Field Operation Division staff to reevaluate the beneficiaries and provide them with additional machinery that was not given to them under the phase one the RCEF-Mechanization Program.



Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) Deputy Director Joel Dator (right) leads the distribution of farm machines to farmers cooperatives and associations, and local government units in Nueva Ecija on Dec. 13, 2024. PHILMECH PHOTO

Phase two of the program will start next year with the recent signing into law of Republic Act 12078, or the Agricultural Tariffication Act.

The beneficiaries include the LGUs of Talavera, Quezon, Muñoz and Cabanatuan, and the Kilusang Lima para sa Lahat MultiPurpose Cooperative, Kaagapay sa Kaunlaran sa Bayan ng Quezon, Cabaducan Farmers Credit Cooperative, Santuyo Water Pump Irrigators Association and Munting Nayon Agricultural Producers Association.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/19/business/agribusiness/ecija-farmers-lgus-get-farm-machines/2024180>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Cops join campaign vs agricultural saboteurs

Justine Xyrah Garcia

December 18, 2024

THE National Police (PNP) is set to join the campaign against agricultural economic saboteurs like profiteers, hoarders and smugglers

Gen. Rommel Francisco Marbil on Wednesday said that the service will help in the implementation of Republic Act 12022 also known as the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act.

This is in line with ongoing government efforts to curb smuggling, hoarding, and profiteering of agricultural products, particularly rice, he added. Marbil reiterated the PNP's commitment to collaborate with implementing agencies to arrest and prosecute those responsible for economic sabotage.

“The PNP is fully prepared to support the implementation of this law to protect our farmers and ensure that rice remains affordable for every Filipino household. Smugglers and hoarders must be held accountable for their role in undermining food security and jeopardizing the livelihoods of our farmers,” he added.

Republic Act 12022 aims to lower rice prices, protect Filipino farmers, and ensure consistent access to affordable food.

The Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, a priority initiative of the Marcos Administration, designates smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, cartels, and financing such activities as economic sabotage, with penalties of life imprisonment and fines three times the value of the confiscated agricultural products. Those involved in the transportation or storage of illegal goods face imprisonment of 20 to 30 years and fines twice the product's value.

The law also mandates the creation of a Daily Price Index to monitor market irregularities and detect economic sabotage. It further establishes the Anti-Agricultural Economic Council and the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Enforcement Group to streamline enforcement efforts.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/18/cops-join-campaign-vs-agricultural-saboteurs/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Manila finalizing rice deals with India, Pakistan

Ada Pelonia
December 19, 2024



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is finalizing agreements with envoys from Pakistan and India to secure commitments for the supply of a combined 2 million metric tons (MMT) of rice.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he had met with the Pakistani ambassador to discuss a memorandum of understanding (MOU), under which Pakistan would allocate the Philippines up to 1 MMT of rice annually. This is about 25 percent of the country's total rice import requirement.

According to Laurel, similar negotiations are also underway with India.

“The intention is to create a level playing field among our rice-supplying nations,” Laurel said during a consultation meeting with rice traders at the Intercity Industrial Estate in Bulacan.

“We want them to compete for our market,” he added.

The DA said this initiative aligns with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s goal to diversify the country’s rice sources and reduce the cost of the food staple, making it more affordable for consumers.

Data from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) showed that rice shipments from January 1 to December 12 have reached 4.48 MMT.

Of the volume that arrived in the country, BPI data indicated that over 3.43 MMT came from Vietnam, which maintained the top spot as the country’s source of imported rice. Thailand was the second-largest supplier, accounting for 567,913.22 MT. The Philippines also imported from other countries, such as Pakistan (244,859.48 MT), Myanmar (199,512.75 MT), and India (22,572.82 MT).

The DA recently said the country’s rice import arrivals could reach a record-high 4.7 MMT by yearend. Earlier, Pakistani Ambassador to the Philippines Imtiaz Ahmad Kazi said his country’s Ministry of Commerce had floated the proposal for an MOU with Manila last year, which would guarantee the volume of rice that would enter the Philippines. (See: www.businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/13/pakistan-targeting-to-export-more-rice-to-phl-envoy/)

The envoy noted that Pakistan is the third largest exporter of rice to the country after Vietnam and Thailand. Kazi said, however, that Pakistan accounts for only less than 6 percent of the Philippines’s total imports. He said his country is capable of exporting as much as 1 MMT of rice to the Philippines.

“We want to increase that share, provided we can also provide the stable, good supply of rice. And that depends on mutual conditions for each other, which means that the Philippines should guarantee us that they want this much rice every year.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/19/manila-finalizing-rice-deals-with-india-pakistan/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Ilocos-Abra irrigation project's new design to benefit three provinces

Justine Xyrah Garcia
December 18, 2024

THE National Economic and Development Authority Board approved on Tuesday the revised design of the Ilocos Norte-Ilocos Sur-Abra Irrigation Project (Inisaip), addressing concerns over its previous plans.

During the 23rd Neda Board meeting at Malacañang, President Marcos confirmed that the updated design resolved issues related to the perceived bias toward Ilocos Norte and Ilocos Sur.

The new design now includes power-generating components to be built in Abra and Nueva Era, Ilocos Sur, ensuring that all three provinces will benefit from the project's hydropower feature.

“Kailangan kasama na sa design iyon. Kahit na hindi sa costing, basta kasama na sa design. Hindi naman natin puwedeng gawin lahat ito tapos lalagyan natin ng hydroelectric afterwards. Kailangan kasama sa umpisa. ‘Pag nagpatayo ng dam nandoon na,” Marcos said.

Valued at P37.5 billion, the Inisaip will involve the construction of an earth and rockfill dam, a Nueva Era afterbay dam, and link canals.

These will irrigate 14,672 hectares of farmland during the wet season and 13,256 hectares during the dry season.

The Palsiguan River will serve as the primary water source for the project, set to run from 2025 to 2030.

Beyond irrigation, the addition of hydropower facilities aims to address the region's energy needs.

Once completed, the project is expected to benefit a total of 32,604 families in the three provinces.

Meanwhile, the Neda Board also approved the construction of seven bridges, viaducts, and 22 calamity response bridges under the Accelerated Bridge Construction Project for Greater Economic Mobility and Calamity Response (ABC Project).

The P25.6 billion ABC Project will be funded through Official Development Assistance and is scheduled for implementation beginning January 2025.

Marcos said the project will improve connectivity, alleviate traffic congestion, and enhance the country's disaster response capabilities in line with Department of Public Works and Highways standards.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/18/ilocos-abra-irrigation-projects-new-design-to-benefit-three-provinces/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Government bans buffalo meat from 3 states in India

Ada Pelonia
December 18, 2024

The Department of Agriculture (DA) temporarily banned the entry of Indian buffalo meat (IBM) from three states in India because of an outbreak of the highly contagious foot-and-mouth disease (FMD).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. signed Memorandum Order (MO) 59, which authorized the ban on IBM from Bihar, Maharashtra, and Telangana.

The DA decided to issue the ban after the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) submitted its official report of the FMD outbreak in Bihar and Telangana on August 22.

Additionally, the agency noted the DA inspection mission audit findings of confirmed outbreaks in Maharashtra affecting cattle and buffaloes.

“There is a need to prevent the entry of FMD-susceptible animals, their products, and byproducts originating from Bihar, Maharashtra, and Telangana to protect the health of the local livestock population,” the order read.

Following this report, Laurel ordered the imposition of the ban and suspended the issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs) for IBM or carabeef.

He also noted that all shipments that are already in transit will be accepted provided that they test negative for the FMD virus.

“All previous approved SPS Import Clearance which have not yet left India after the issuance of this order are hereby revoked and therefore advised not to sail their shipments.”

According to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), FMD is a highly contagious disease that affects cattle, swine, sheep, and goats, which could affect livestock production and disrupt regional and international trade.

Additional carabeef source

Meanwhile, the DA said it has approved the accreditation of 34 Indian companies to supply frozen buffalo meat, which is locally known as carabeef.

The list of accredited Indian meat exporters includes the six companies that were initially approved in 2019 and have recently sought to renew their accreditation. The new accreditation will be valid for three years, which will expire on December 12, 2027.

Laurel said the accreditation of additional Indian meat exporters aligns with his broader vision of attracting more foreign companies to the Philippine market.

“We do not intend to increase imports. What we want is to encourage more foreign companies to compete for our market, which will ultimately drive down the cost of imported agricultural products, benefiting consumers,” he said.

The agriculture chief confirmed that all 34 Indian exporters had met the requirements.

However, he added that 13 of these companies will not be immediately allowed to export carabeef to the Philippines, since their operations are based in Maharashtra, Telangana, and Bihar where active FMD outbreaks have been reported.

The DA has imposed an import ban from the said states, noting that shipments of carabeef from these regions will be prohibited until India’s National Competent Authority declares them free from FMD.

‘No heat-treated products’

The agency also clarified that it will not allow exemptions for heat-treated products, since the accreditation pertains specifically to the trade in frozen carabeef.

However, Laurel stated that if India has a method of boiling carabeef to address FMD concerns, which is similar to the process Pakistan uses for buffalo meat it exports to China, then he would consider allowing such imports.

“If they can do that, I will allow it,” he said.

The DA said the accreditation follows a thorough verification process conducted by the agency, including an inspection mission by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) and the NMIS.

“The audit assessed India’s compliance with the Philippines’ animal health and food safety standards,” it said.

The agency said the BAI team reviewed animal health protocols in seven Indian states—Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Bihar wherein active FMD cases were found in the last three states.

The NMIS team confirmed that all 34 companies seeking accreditation met international food safety standards, including good manufacturing practices, hazard analysis, and critical control points.

The Philippines imports around 40 percent of its carabeef needs because domestic production cannot fully meet market demand.

Carabeef is one of the raw materials used by local companies in manufacturing processed meat products.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/18/government-bans-buffalo-meat-from-3-states-in-india/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

ASF vaccines ready for commercial use by March 2025–DA

Ada Pelonia
December 18, 2024

The vaccines against African swine fever (ASF) will be available for commercial use by March next year, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the agency is currently distributing the 150,000 doses of ASF vaccines that have arrived in the country recently.

“If the 150,000 doses are used up, there will be mass trial results. Hopefully, we can start (its) commercial use possibly by March next year,” Laurel told reporters in an interview.

The agriculture chief also said the government has procured 490,000 doses, which will arrive on a staggered basis until the first half of 2025.

The DA started the government-controlled inoculation of the ASF vaccine in Lobo, Batangas last August. The municipality was considered ground zero of the ASF outbreak in the same month.

Figures from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) showed that 88 municipalities have active ASF cases as of December 6.

Bird flu vaccine

Meanwhile, the DA chief said vaccines against Avian Influenza (AI) will also be available by March next year.

“The vaccine for AI will probably come out also by March. We’re doing the trials now,” he said.

“If that comes out in March, we will have to (allot) P300 million for that.”

Laurel said the amount will be enough to procure 30 million doses.

He also said the agency will prioritize the vaccination of layers against bird flu. “The policy is still being formulated, but we can allot a budget for (the vaccination).”

BAI recently announced the first detection of the H5N2 strain of avian influenza in the Philippines.

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

“This is the first detection of HPAI H5N2 in the country and the first recorded avian influenza case in the province.”

Despite being the first detected strain of AI in the country, the DA and industry sources allayed concerns that it would cause a spike in the prices of chicken and eggs.

“It will not have an impact [on] prices,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said.

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

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

De Mesa noted that the BAI is conducting an ongoing investigation to determine how the strain arrived in the country.

He also said culling operations on infected animals in the area have already been conducted.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/18/asf-vaccines-ready-for-commercial-use-by-march-2025-da/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Bad weather unlikely to dent PHL unmilled rice output

Ada Pelonia
December 18, 2024



The country's unmilled rice production in the fourth quarter will be higher than the previous year's level despite the onslaught of typhoons that struck the country in October and November.

Based on the Philippine Statistics Authority's (PSA) survey of standing crops, paddy rice output in the fourth quarter could reach 7.44 million metric tons (MMT) due to an expansion in harvest area.

PSA said its data indicated that palay production from October to December may increase by 2.8 percent to 7.44 MMT, from last year's actual output of 7.24 MMT.

However, the latest figure is 2.3 percent lower than the agency's initial estimate of 7.61 MMT.

The PSA said the total palay harvest area during the period may expand by 2.8 percent to 1.8 million hectares (ha) from the 1.75 million ha recorded in the same period last year. It added that the yield per hectare for the period remained at 4.13 metric tons (MT).

“As of 01 November 2024, about 988,950 hectares or 54.9 percent of the 1.80 million hectares updated harvest area of standing crop have been harvested. This translates to palay output of 4.18 million metric tons,” the PSA report read.

“Of the total area of 811,330 hectares of standing palay yet to be harvested as of 01 November 2024, 3.5 percent were at the vegetative stage, 30.4 percent at the reproductive stage, and 66.1 percent at the maturing stage.”

Meanwhile, PSA said the results of its survey showed that corn output may decline by 1.5 percent to 1.93 MMT from last year’s 1.96 MMT.

This figure is also 1.9 percent lower than the agency’s initial estimate of 1.97 MMT, based on PSA data.

The agency also said corn harvest area during the period may have contracted by 3.5 percent to 598,780 ha from the 620,420 ha recorded in the previous year while yield per hectare may have inched up by 1.9 percent to 3.22 MT from 3.16 MT.

“As of 01 November 2024, about 278,660 hectares or 46.5 percent of the 598,780 hectares updated harvest area of standing corn have been harvested, translating to a 1.00 million metric tons of corn output,” the PSA said.

“Of the total area of 320,120 hectares of standing corn yet to be harvested as of 01 November 2024, about 2.7 percent were at the vegetative stage, 42.1 percent at the reproductive stage, and 55.2 percent at the maturing stage.”

Image credits: www.da.gov.ph

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/18/bad-weather-unlikely-to-dent-phl-unmilled-rice-output/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Manila bans cattle from Japan due to LSD outbreak

Ada Pelonia
December 18, 2024

The Department of Agriculture (DA) slapped a temporary ban on imported live cattle and buffalo from Japan following an outbreak of lumpy skin disease (LSD).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. signed Memorandum Order (MO) 57, which imposed the ban to prevent the entry of the LSD virus into the country and protect the health of the local cattle and water buffalo population.

The DA issued the ban after the National Institute of Animal Health (NIAH) National Agriculture and Food Research Organization confirmed an LSD outbreak in Maebaru, Fukuoka, Japan last November 5, which affected domestic cattle.

According to the order, the Japanese agency submitted its official report on November 15.

Following this, Laurel issued emergency measures for the importation of the commodity and its byproducts subject to the country's import terms and conditions and regulatory requirements.

Under the order, live bovines and water buffaloes, including semen and embryos, are not allowed to enter the country.

However, the following products are allowed under certain circumstances:

- Skeletal muscle meat, casings, gelatine and collagen, tallow, hooves, and horns since these are considered “safe commodities” and are not included in the temporary restriction;
- Milk and milk products are allowed provided that there is additional attestation in the international veterinary certificate certifying that the said products were subjected to pasteurization; and

- Meal and flour from blood, meat other than skeletal muscle, or bones from bovines and water buffaloes are also allowed under the order, but with additional attestation that these were processed using heat treatment and precautions were taken after processing.

Hides of bovines and water buffaloes will be permitted to enter the Philippines but with additional certification from the country of origin's veterinary authority that the products were dry-salted or wet-salted for at least 14 days before dispatch; or treated for at least seven days in salt with the addition of 2 percent sodium carbonate; or dried for at least 42 days at a temperature of at least 20 degrees Celsius.

The order indicated that other products of bovines and water buffaloes are allowed, provided that the products were processed to ensure the destruction of the virus.

According to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the LSD virus is economically significant since it can cause a temporary drop in milk output, temporary or permanent infertility in bulls, hide damage, and, in some cases, death.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/18/manila-bans-cattle-from-japan-due-to-lsd-outbreak/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Cocoa supply crunch isn't over yet as top grower's crop falters

Bloomberg News
December 18, 2024

The outlook for top grower Ivory Coast's cocoa harvest is souring, with bad weather and a virulent crop disease threatening to deepen a global supply crunch and add to the price rally that has blown past records.

Production in the country, which accounts for more than a third of global production, is expected at 1.9 million tons in the 2024-25 season, according to an average of eight analyst and trader estimates compiled by Bloomberg. That's down nearly 10 percent from a government outlook of about 2.1 to 2.2 million tons near the start of the season in October.

Poor harvests in West Africa—the biggest cocoa hub—plunged the world into its largest-ever supply deficit last year, and waning prospects in Ivory Coast will now make rebuilding those stockpiles more tenuous. That could dampen traders' earlier expectations for a small surplus and extend the dizzying streak for prices that's hit both chocolate makers and consumers. Cocoa futures surged to an all-time high of \$11,925 a ton this week.

While climate change remains a top challenge, low farmer pay and swollen shoot virus—an incurable crop disease—continues to impact yields in Ivory Coast.

“The outlook for cocoa is still for a very tight market and very volatile market,” said Steve Wateridge, head of research at TRS by Expana. “As a company we've been disappointed with the lack of efforts to address the structural issues that contributed to reduced output in the last season.”

Favorable weather during the development of the main-crop had fueled hopes of a better harvest with chocolate companies talking up the expected recovery in earnings calls. But that outlook has dimmed after heavy rains lashed farms, knocking down flowers and also hurting bean quality.

A spokesperson for Ivory Coast's industry regulator, Le Conseil Cafe-Cacao, declined to comment.

Now, the seasonal Harmattan winds raise the risk of drying out soil and stressing the smaller mid-crop that is typically collected from April.

Soil moisture for the past month has been much lower than normal and lower compared to the last few years, according to Brandon Fox, operational meteorologist at weather forecaster Maxar Technologies Inc.

Global stockpiles are also at the lowest in decades with inventories in exchange approved warehouses in the US shrinking daily.

On the demand front, bean processing has been surprisingly strong so far this year, and the next quarterly figures due in January will give more clues on whether that has held up.

“There is not going to be the surplus that everyone was anticipating,” said Julio Moscoso, commercial director at Latam Commodity Traders. “Prices will continue to rally as hedge funds re-enter the market but we will eventually see a vengeful correction in prices.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/18/cocoa-supply-crunch-isnt-over-yet-as-top-growers-crop-falters/>

ABANTE TONITE:

DA inurot Pakistan, India sa 2M toneladang bigas

December 18, 2024



Nakikipag-usap na ang Department of Agriculture sa Pakistan at India para sa suplay ng 2 milyong toneladang bigas sakaling kakailanganin ito ng Pilipinas.

Sabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., nakipag-usap na siya sa ambassador ng Pakistan para sa alokasyon ng 1 milyong toneladang bigas taon-taon na katumbas ng 25% ng iaangkat na bigas ng Pilipinas at tinatapos na ang memorandum of understanding para rito.

Aniya, may negosasyon na rin sa India para rito.

Sabi ni Tiu Laurel, ang layunin ay para maglabanan ang mga magsusuplay ng bigas sa Pilipinas at gawing patas ang labanan ng mga bansang magsusuplay ng bigas sa bansa.

Sa kasalukuyan, sa Vietnam nanggagaling ang pinakamaraming inaangkat na bigas sa bansa. Nitong Enero, nagpirmahan ng kasunduan ang Pilipinas at Vietnam para sa suplay ng 1.5 hanggang 2 milyong toneladang bigas kada taon.

Pinulong ni Tiu Laurel ang mga rice traders sa Intercity Industrial Estate sa Bocaue sa Bulacan kung saan hiningi niya ang kanilang suporta sa Rice-for-All na programa ng DA.

Sabi ni Tiu Laurel, nangako ang mga traders na magbebenta na ito ng bigas ng P40 per kilo sa ilalim ng programang Kadiwa ng Pangulo. Nag-lalayon ang DA na magkaroon ng mas maraming Kadiwa kiosk sa mga palengke at terminal ng mga sasakyan na magbebenta ng murang bigas. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/12/18/da-inurot-pakistan-india-sa-2m-toneladang-bigas/>

ABANTE TONITE:

Baka, kalabaw mula Japan, India bawal muna

December 18, 2024

Pansamantalang pinagbabawal ng Department of Agriculture ang pag-aangkat ng baka, kalabaw, at mga produktong galing Japan at karne ng kalabaw o buffalo meat mula sa Bihar, Maharashtra, at Telangana sa India.

Inutos ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. ang pagbabawal sa pag-aangkat ng live cattle at buffalo at mga produkto galing sa mga ito mula sa Japan sa ilalim ng DA Memorandum Order No. 57. Sabi ni Tiu Laurel, pinagbabawal ang pag-aangkat mula Japan ng live cattle, buffalo, at mga produktong galing sa mga ito nang magkaroon ng outbreak ng Lumpy Skin Disease sa Fukuoka nung November 5, 2024. Aniya, ito ay para mapangalagaan ang lokal na industriya at hindi makapasok ang LSD virus sa bansa.

Pinagbawal naman niya ang pag-aangkat ng buffalo meat mula Bihar, Maharashtra, at Telangana sa India sa ilalim ng DA MO No. 59. Aniya, ito ay dahil nagkaroon ng outbreak ng foot and mouth disease (FMD) doon at pinagbabawal ang pagkuha ng buffalo meat para mapangalagaan ang lokal na industriya.

Ang buffalo meat ang ginagamit ng mga food manufacturers para sa mga ginagawa nilang de-latang corned beef at iba pa.

Sabi ni Tiu Laurel, August 22, 2024 pa nagsimula ang FMD outbreak sa Bihar at Telangana. Nagpadala din ng inspection mission ang DA sa Maharashtra at nakumpirma nitong may FMD outbreak din sa lugar. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/12/18/baka-kalabaw-mula-japan-india-bawal-muna/>

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:

Rice traders, importers payag sa P40/kilo sa NCR markets ngayong Disyembre

Joy Cantos

December 19, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Mismong mga rice importers at traders na sa Bulacan ang magdadala at magbebenta ng murang bigas sa iba't-ibang palengke sa Metro Manila simula sa susunod na linggo.

“Ito ang ipinangako ni Celestino Marquez, pangulo ng Intercity Rice Mills and Traders sa Balagtas, Bulacan matapos makumbinse natin sa pangunguna ni Senior Deputy Speaker Aurelio Gonzales ang grupo na ibenta direktso sa merkado ang mga bigas na hawak nila,” wika ni House Deputy Majority leader Erwin Tulfo.

Ayon kay G. Marquez, “pwede naming ibenta ang mga bigas namin direktso sa mga tao sa halagang P40 hanggang P45 per kilo.”

Dagdag pa ni Tulfo, “this is a breakthrough and we are thankful na tutulong din itong mga negosyante sa pagresolba sa problema ng ating bayan.”

Sinabi naman ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Laurel na kailangang bigyan sila ng permit (rice traders) na magbenta ng tingi o di kaya ibagsak nila sa 250 DA stalls sa NCR markets ang bigas nila.

Ayon naman kay Senior Deputy Speaker Gonzales, “this is the initiative of Speaker (Martin) Romualdez na kung pwede kausapin ang mga negosyante na tumulong sa pagpapababa ng presyo ng bigas.”

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/12/19/2408340/rice-traders-importers-payag-sa-p40kilo-sa-ncr-markets-ngayong-disyembre>