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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **Economists urge review of Marcos admin's budget priorities amid cuts to critical sectors**

**BY DERCO ROSAL**

Dec 23, 2024 10:09 AM

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While critical sectors face budget cuts, economists expressed concerns over the Marcos administration's budget priorities, citing inflated discretionary allocations in the 2025 budgets for the House of Representatives and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

The Philippine Economic Society (PES) is urging the president to review certain "misallocation of funds," including a 106-percent increase in the Congress' budget, a P288.6 billion surge in the DPWH's budget, and P26 billion AKAP Fund with 'unclear objectives'.

Alongside this, the PES is also appealing to the president the sectors facing budget reductions.

"We are deeply concerned [about] significant cuts to critical sectors such as healthcare, education, agriculture, and social welfare risk undermining its goals of Inclusive growth, poverty alleviation, and resilience," PES said in a Dec. 22 letter.

## **P187 billion overall cut**

According to the organization, the P74.47 billion cut in PhilHealth subsidies risks derailing Universal Health Care (UHC), leaving vulnerable groups without access and threatening equitable healthcare delivery.

It added that the P11.6 billion budget cut for the Department of Education (DepEd) threatens to deepen the learning crisis, hinder teacher training, and weaken efforts to prepare Filipinos for sustainable jobs and a competitive economy.

Likewise, the P20 billion cut in the Department of Agriculture's (DA) budget threatens food security, while the P83 billion cut in the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) budget endangers safety nets and worsens poverty.

"We recognize the limitations on reallocation and transfer of funds without legislative authority," PES stated, stressing, however, that removing "unnecessary and non-transparent allocations" will help prioritize the urgent needs of the public in the budget.

As such, the PES urged the administration to restore funding for critical sectors like healthcare, education, and agriculture, while supporting strategic subsidies for PhilHealth and climate-resilient farming.

It also called for expanding feeding programs for children and ensuring transparency in social transfers to ensure equitable distribution.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/12/23/pes-questions-boost-for-congress-dpwh-s-budgets>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Pets, poultry to fuel rise in corn imports

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

December 23, 2024 | 12:00am



The US Department of Agriculture - Foreign Agricultural Service in Manila (USDA-FAS) projected that corn imports from July to June next year would reach 1.63 million MT, about 109,000 MT higher than the 1.521 million MT recorded in the previous market year.

**STAR / File**

MANILA, Philippines — The growing demand for pet food and sustained poultry expansion would drive the country's corn import in the current market year to rise by seven percent year-on-year to over 1.6 million metric tons (MT).

The US Department of Agriculture - Foreign Agricultural Service in Manila (USDA-FAS) projected that corn imports from July to June next year would reach 1.63 million MT, about 109,000 MT higher than the 1.521 million MT recorded in the previous market year.

The international agency attributed the increase to growth in both poultry feed and pet food industries. It noted that corn imports in the previous market year of 2023-2024 expanded by more than half to 1.521 million MT from 907,000 in market year 2022-2023.

The extension of the reduced tariff rate on corn imports also provides support for sustained entry of foreign stocks, the USDA-FAS Manila said.

Earlier this year, President Marcos issued Executive Order 62 which extended until 2028 the lower corn tariff rates of five percent for in-quota imports and 15 percent for out-quota imports.

USDA-FAS Manila estimated that the country's total corn feed and residual consumption would reach 7.6 million MT in the current market year, up by 200,000 MT from 7.4 million MT.

“Industry contacts report that the demand for chicken meat and eggs are expected to further increase within the current MY (market year), as alternative sources of protein for the growing population,” it said.

The international agency added that the slow recovery of the domestic hog industry would also contribute to the increase in corn feed demand, especially with the prospects of African swine fever vaccine commercialization on the horizon.

“Additionally, industry contacts also report a positive outlook for pet food this market year,” USDA-FAS Manila said.

Meanwhile, food, seed and industrial consumption of corn would also rise to 2.23 million MT from 2.2 million driven by higher demand for corn-based food snacks and by-products like cornstarch and oil, USDA-FAS Manila added.

Production wise, USDA-FAS Manila projected that the country's output would inch up to 8.15 million MT from 8.119 million MT in the previous market year.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/12/23/2409197/pets-poultry-fuel-rise-corn-imports>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# **Kanlaon agriculture damage hits P32.8 million**

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

December 23, 2024 | 12:00am



**Mt Kanlaon aerial shot taken by Task Force Kanlaon on December 12, 2024.**

**Sancarloscity DRRMO via Facebook**

MANILA, Philippines — The damage caused by the eruption of Kanlaon Volcano to the agriculture sector has reached P32.83 million, the Negros Occidental Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC) said.

Citing a report from the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist, the PDRRMC said the damage to high-value commercial crops stands at P29,268,182. It pegged the damage to rice at P2,576,406 and to corn at P503,352.

The report also said the damage to livestock reached P268,429 and P214,000 for aquaculture as of Dec. 21.

Based on the latest bulletin of the Department of Agriculture operation center, 297 hectares of agricultural areas have been damaged. The DA pegged the volume of production loss at 832 metric tons (MT).

A report of the DA regional office in Western Visayas said at least 780 farmers were affected by the eruption of Kanlaon Volcano on Dec. 9.

“Additional damage and losses are expected as assessment is ongoing in areas affected by the Kanlaon volcanic activity,” the DA said.

According to the DA, at least 1,010 animals were evacuated to various evacuation sites in La Castellana and La Carlota.

“In response to the needs of farmers affected by the Kanlaon volcanic activity, DA is providing various forms of assistance, including agricultural inputs such as rice and corn seeds as well as drugs and biologics for livestock animals,” a statement declared.

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

The DA promised to indemnify insured affected farmers through the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/12/23/2409286/kanlaon-agriculture-damage-hits-p328-million>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Over 5,000 Iloilo, Guimaras farmers freed from P314 million debt

By: [Perla Lena](#) -

Philippine News Agency / 08:49 AM December 23, 2024



FARMING composite image from Inquirer file/stock photos

ILOILO CITY — Over 5,200 agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) from Iloilo and Guimaras have been freed from debt following the release of Certificates of Condonation with Release of Mortgage (CoCRoM) on Saturday.

Led by Department of Agrarian Reform Undersecretary Jesry Palmares, 7,039 CoCRoMs were distributed at Iloilo Sports Complex, covering a total of 5,465 hectares valued at P314.6 million.

Palmares cited the year-long effort to secure the documents, emphasizing their significance as proof of legitimate land ownership that beneficiaries can pass on to future generations.

In addition to CoCRoMs, 479 titles for 473.9 hectares were granted to 351 ARBs under the Newlands project.

Meanwhile, 1,100 electronic titles covering 879.9 hectares were also distributed to 710 ARBs under the Support to Parcelization of Lands to Individual Titling project.

Barotac Nuevo farmer Pura Barquilla expressed gratitude, saying the condonation would allow them to invest in land cultivation rather than paying amortization.

Iloilo Governor Arthur Defensor Jr. highlighted the critical role of ARBs as pillars of agriculture and the economy.

He noted that government support for agriculture would be channeled through agrarian reform communities, which also serve as hubs for barangay-based agro-tourism programs.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2017894/over-5000-iloilo-guimaras-farmers-freed-from-p314-million-debt>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Ombudsman: Dismissal of Escoto as BFAR chief stays

By: [Dianne Sampang](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 02:33 PM December 23, 2024



FILE PHOTO: The Office of the Ombudsman is keeping its decision dismissing Demosthenes Escoto as chief of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR). In an eight-page order, the Ombudsman rejected Escoto's April 26, 2024, motion for reconsideration on its February 2024 ruling that sacked him as BFAR national director over his role in the P2.1-billion purchase of a monitoring system for fishing vessels in 2018. Philippine Daily Inquirer / NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

MANILA, Philippines — The Office of the Ombudsman is keeping its decision dismissing Demosthenes Escoto as chief of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) earlier this year.

In an eight-page order, the Ombudsman rejected Escoto's April 26 motion for reconsideration on its February ruling that sacked him as BFAR national director over his role in the P2.1-billion purchase of a monitoring system for fishing vessels in 2018.

Escoto was found guilty of grave misconduct as the deal was deemed disadvantageous to the government.

His motion for reconsideration included the appeal of his co-respondents, Eduardo Gongona and Simon Tucker, who were also indicted for allegedly violating the Anti-Graft Corrupt Practices Act.

Escoto argued in his motion that “[t]here is a lack of evidence supporting the conclusion that evident bad faith, manifest partiality, or gross inexcusable negligence attended the commission of the alleged crimes.”

However, the Ombudsman said: “[h]is actions, minute or substantial, were all instrumental in the success of the anomalous scheme that led to the award of the contract to SRT-UK. And no amount of failure on the part of the complainant to include other individuals in the charge could undermine that.”

The Ombudsman likewise mentioned in its latest order that Escoto’s dismissal from service includes the cancellation of his eligibility to work in government, forfeiture of retirement benefits, and perpetual disqualification from re-employment in a government service.

According to the Ombudsman’s February 5 decision, Escoto erred in accepting an “unqualified” company for the procurement, which was supposed to be funded through a loan from the government of France.

Based on the complaint of Atty. James Victoriano, Escoto and former Department of Agriculture Assistant Secretary Hansel Didulo acted against the interest of the state when they awarded SRT-United Kingdom the P2.1-billion contract for the purchase of 5,000 units of transceivers for catcher’s vessels.

However, the Office of the Ombudsman dismissed the administrative charges against Didulo “for insufficiency of evidence.”

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2017975/ombudsman-dismissal-of-escoto-as-bfar-chief-stays>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Tariff cuts shore up rice supply amid less output

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:11 AM December 23, 2024

Despite the anticipated decline in output, the supply of milled rice in the Philippines is expected to rise during the July 2024 to June 2025 marketing year, thanks to lower import tariffs, according to estimates by American researchers.

This is predicted along with expectations that the Philippines' output of milled rice might decrease by 3 percent due to the negative impacts of El Niño and La Niña phenomena.

The United States Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA-FAS) projects Philippine milled rice production to settle at 11.95 million metric tons (MT) from the estimated 12.32 million MT produced in the 2023 to 2024 marketing year. Before that, in the marketing year 20222023, the USDA-FAS pegged the milled rice output even higher at 12.62 MT.

Citing advisories from the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), the USDA-FAS said that "La Niña conditions ... immediately began to manifest" after El Niño ended last June.

To clarify, American and Philippine climate agencies have not declared that La Niña is already occurring. The latest bulletin from the US-based Climate Prediction Center (CPC) dated Dec. 12 maintained a "La Niña Watch" status.

The CPC said "La Niña conditions are most likely to emerge" by January 2025.

Meanwhile, Pagasa's bulletin dated Dec. 18 maintained a "La Niña Alert" status—a step above "La Niña Watch"—saying that "La Niña-like conditions are currently prevailing."

"The succeeding La Niña and the typhoon season in [the fourth quarter of 2024] put additional pressure on domestic palay production," the USDA-FAS reported.

La Niña is a climate condition that brings greater than usual rainfall to the Philippines while El Niño causes the opposite.

“After the El Niño, the La Niña caused successive tropical cyclones beginning at the onset of [marketing year 2024-2025], which have negatively impacted domestic food production, especially rice,” the American agency said.

The aggregate volume losses on palay or unmilled rice production totaled 519,783 MT as of November this year, based on the tally of the Philippine Department of Agriculture’s Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Operations Center.

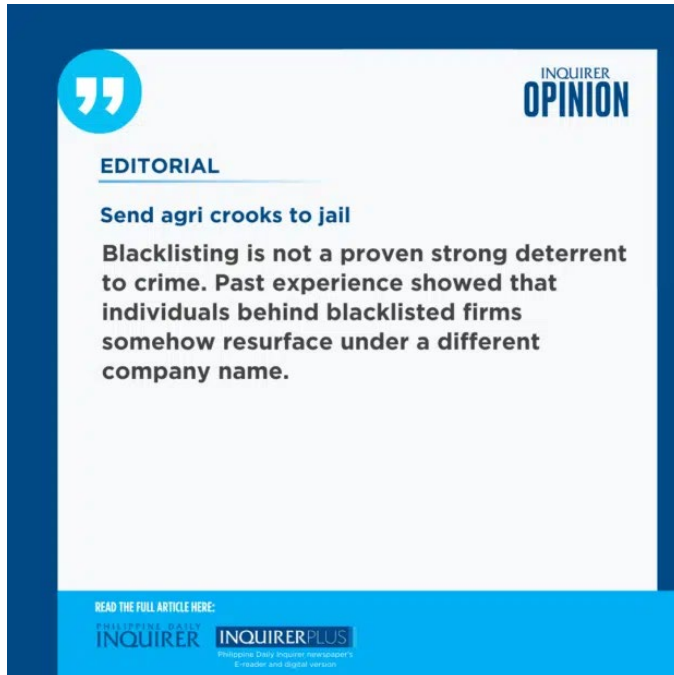
“Industry contacts also report that farmers were unable to replant, as typhoons occurred close to the harvest season [which begins in September and peaks by the end of October],” the USDA-FAS said.

The USDA-FAS report also noted that the government usually prepares its seed assistance for the next cropping season, yet farmers sometimes prefer cultivating cash crops such as vegetables over grains—like rice or corn—after typhoons due to a shorter harvest time. **INQ**

<https://business.inquirer.net/498145/tariff-cuts-shore-up-rice-supply-amid-less-output>

# Send agri crooks to jail

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 04:35 AM December 23, 2024



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. is making headway on his promise to rid the farm sector of scalawags. He reported that at least 10 private companies have been blacklisted by the Department of Agriculture (DA) in the last six months for their involvement in illegal trade or other unlawful agricultural practices—more than the number in the past six years combined. Three other companies with import licenses were also sanctioned for their involvement in anticompetitive practices such as price manipulation and collusion.

As a result, the licenses of the blacklisted firms engaged in misdeclaration and illegal importation were revoked, while those without licenses were banned from dealing with the DA. “This should serve as a clear warning to those who attempt to challenge our resolve in going after smugglers and unscrupulous traders whose illegal activities harm our farmers, fisherfolk and consumers,” Tiu Laurel said.

The punitive actions are in line with the DA’s intensified efforts to end smuggling, profiteering, hoarding, cartels, and other activities that raise food prices and destabilize the local market. The DA has been going after importers bringing in illegally sourced agricultural products even before President Marcos signed last month Republic Act No. 12002, or the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, as Tiu Laurel vowed during his appointment to the DA in November 2023 that his agency will go after importers engaged in illegal practices that undermine government revenues and put public health at risk.

## **Not enough deterrent**

However, while the DA's blacklisting of erring companies is commendable, this is not enough deterrent for other firms scheming to profit out of the agriculture sector through devious means, including misdeclaration, illegal importation, and anticompetitive trade practices.

Blacklisting is not a proven strong deterrent to crime. Past experience showed that individuals behind blacklisted firms somehow resurface under a different company name. For example, a Quezon City-based construction company that was awarded a multimillion-peso road project in Misamis Oriental in 2019 was among the contractors blacklisted by the Department of Public Works and Highways the year before. The company, Syndtite Construction Corp., was discovered to be the former RC Tagala Construction, which had cornered billions of pesos worth of government contracts during the first 18 months of the previous Duterte administration before its blacklisting by the Department of Public Works and Highways.

## **Ensure accountability**

As Senate Minority Leader Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III pointed out in reaction to the DA blacklisting, the agency must file criminal charges with urgency to ensure accountability. "Make an example of these 10 companies (so that others will not follow in their footsteps). This, however, will only be meaningful if the wheels of justice move swiftly," Pimentel stressed.

Since Tiu Laurel vowed that the government was "prepared to take more decisive actions" against smugglers, especially with the recent enactment of the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act, the DA should focus on bringing charges against violators and pursuing these cases up to conviction. Under the law, smuggling, hoarding, and cartel operations involving agricultural products are classified as economic sabotage. Rice, corn, beef, and other ruminants, pork, poultry, garlic, onions, carrots, other vegetables, fruit, fish, salt, and other aquatic products are covered under the law. The smuggling and hoarding of agricultural products is also considered economic sabotage when the value of the goods involved exceeds P10 million.

And while it is true that some cases have been filed before, progress in prosecuting the violators needs to speed up. In September this year, for instance, the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) filed charges against a dozen unscrupulous onion traders whose cartel-like activities adversely impacted consumers and the broader economy. Following instructions from Mr. Marcos, the PCC charged 12 companies and individuals for violating the Philippine Competition Act in their importation and trading of onions. The investigation revealed that these traders colluded to allocate import clearances among

themselves, allowing them to control more than half of the Philippines' onion import volume through an anticompetitive behavior punishable under the Competition Act.

Consumers need to see progress in cases such as that filed by the PCC. They need to see these charges moving speedily until the agricultural crooks are punished. Prosecuting, convicting, and sending high-profile agricultural smugglers and other violators to jail will be the most effective deterrent to protect farmers and consumers against these illegal activities. Threats such as blacklisting can do little to make them stop.

Only when they see violators put behind bars will they believe that the government is serious in going after unscrupulous traders and send a very clear message to would-be violators that they cannot escape the long arm of the law.

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/179412/send-agri-crooks-to-jail>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Hog repopulation in 2025 to be driven by strong market prices

December 23, 2024 | 8:17 pm



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

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

HOG production is expected to expand next year with farmers attracted by strong market prices, as their risks are increasingly mitigated by the impending African Swine Fever (ASF) vaccine rollout, an industry group said.

“Next year, hog production will grow. Despite ASF outbreaks, farmers remain resilient and will repopulate because of continuous good liveweight prices,” Alfred Ng, vice-chairman of the National Federation of Hog Farmers, Inc., said via Viber.

During the third quarter, hog production declined 8% to 414,610 MT, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

Mr. Ng said that demand for pork will likely remain high as domestic supply continues to fall short.

He added that the INSPIRE (Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion) breeder program will “start bearing fruit next year.”

The ASF virus, which was first detected in the Philippines in 2019, has continued to affect the size of the hog herd, with infections triggering culls of animals in nearby farms.

The Philippines logged a resurgence of ASF cases in August, prompting the government to fast-track its limited vaccine rollout to commercial and small growers.



Recent outbreaks were blamed on the spread of contaminated water due to heavy rains and tropical cyclones during the second half.

“With more acceptance of the vaccine and with imminent announcement of vaccine success, we see (Food and Drug Administration) giving approval for commercial use and many farmers using vaccine secretly will now openly purchase vaccines to protect their herds,” he said.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said approval for commercial use of the ASF vaccine could come by February or March.

Only the AVAC ASF Live vaccine from Vietnam has received approval for a limited government-controlled rollout. The Food and Drug Administration has issued a Certificate of Product Registration for AVAC, valid for two years and subject to annual review.

The DA has allocated P350 million to procure 600,000 doses for the hog farmers in the initial target areas.

“We hope that more vaccine will be trialed and approved so the vaccination costs come down,” he added.

“The pork price outlook will remain good for 2025. Farmers will be encouraged to repopulate and expand their businesses especially if a good commercial vaccine is available,” he said.

According to DA price monitors, as of Dec. 20, a kilogram of pork shoulder cost P300 to P380 per kilo in public markets, with pork belly fetching P340 to P420.

Mr. Ng said the pork trade in Cebu is expected to revive next year, adding to the supply of pork in the market.

“More important, breeder farms from Cebu and Bantayan Island can once again operate and help with the breeder supply on Luzon,” he added.

As of Dec. 6, 88 municipalities across 19 provinces had active ASF cases, according to the Bureau of Animal Industry.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/12/23/643275/hog-repopulation-in-2025-to-be-driven-by-strong-market-prices/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# New ASF zoning rules to be issued by January

December 23, 2024 | 12:04 am



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it will issue new zoning rules for areas affected by outbreaks of African Swine Fever (ASF) by January.

“Our direction is that we will change our coding system. Previously it was color codes,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. told reporters, referring to the color designations for areas deemed hot zones for the disease.

The current system designates as red zones areas with confirmed ASF cases. Pink zones are near infected areas or are ASF-free areas in infected provinces. Yellow zones are deemed high-risk areas; light green zones have no cases but are near yellow zones, and dark green zones are ASF free.

Mr. Laurel said that the new mapping system will only indicate whether areas have active cases of ASF or not.

“That it will be easier, because now there is a stigma. Farmers have not been reporting disease because they do not want to be categorized as being in red zones,” he added.

He added that the policy is also expected to facilitate the transport of uninfected hogs to and from ASF-affected areas.

He said that the restricted movement of hogs within ASF-hit areas has created imbalances in the supply of pork.

“That will basically stabilize the market for pork. This should lower the average price of pork because there is an influx of (supply),” Mr. Laurel added.

According to the DA price monitors as of Dec. 19, a kilogram of pork shoulder cost P300 to P380 per kilo in public markets, with pork belly fetching P340 to P410.

ASF was first detected in the Philippines in 2019.

As of Dec. 6, 88 municipalities across 19 provinces had active ASF cases, according to the Bureau of Animal Industry. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/12/23/642996/new-asf-zoning-rules-to-be-issued-by-january/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# PHL food services industry growth seen at 12% in 2025, USDA says

December 23, 2024 | 12:03 am



**REUTERS**

THE Philippine food services industry is projected to grow 12% next year as store networks and foot traffic expand, according to the US Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

“Reaching pre-pandemic levels in 2025, FAS Manila sees continued food service sales growth at 12% with the expansion of stores and customer queues in restaurants,” the USDA said in a report.

It added that more customers are dining out due to the opening of new restaurants, cafés, kiosks, and bars, as more franchise international restaurants enter the Philippines.

Increased tourism and the resumption of public events are also expected to bolster the recovery in food services.

The USDA said that sales in full-service restaurants are expected to grow 10% next year due to store expansion. Full-service restaurants account for 17% of the industry.

“As restaurant chains expand, new stores will open in other cities and rural areas through expansion and investment from franchisors,” it added.

Café and bar sales are estimated to expand 15%, also driven by new outlets.

The USDA said street stall and kiosk sales are expected to rise 12% next year as consumer mobility continues to improve.

“With increased consumer mobility in 2024, FAS Manila sees further sales growth in 2025 due to the convenience provided by street stalls and kiosks to commuters amidst increased traffic,” it added.

The USDA said that the growing number of international brands opening in the Philippines presents an opportunity for the entry of US products. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/12/23/642995/phl-food-services-industry-growth-seen-at-12-in-2025-usda-says/>

## **BUSINESS WORLD:**

# France bird flu-free after month without outbreaks

December 23, 2024 | 12:01 am



## **REUTERS**

PARIS — France has declared itself to be free of highly pathogenic avian influenza in the absence of new outbreaks for more than a month, though the country remains on high alert for the virus that has been spreading rapidly in Europe, the agriculture ministry said.

France had recorded 12 farm outbreaks of the disease, commonly called bird flu, since early August, as well as three cases among backyard poultry, the ministry said in a statement.

Surveillance was lifted in the past week at the locations of the most recent cases, it said. The return to bird flu-free status under international rules could help French trade by leading some importing countries to lift restrictions typically introduced following bird flu outbreaks.

“Good news for our poultry sector, enabled by the vaccination strategy implemented since October 2023 and which will continue in 2025,” acting Agriculture Minister Annie Genevard said in a post on X regarding the bird flu-free status.

France launched a year ago a vaccination programme for farm ducks, which are notably reared for foie gras pate and are seen as particularly vulnerable to bird flu.

The US, meanwhile, is grappling with transmission of bird flu to cattle and humans. It reported its first severe human case of bird flu after suspected contact with an infected backyard flock. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/12/23/642993/france-bird-flu-free-after-month-without-outbreaks/>

## BUSINESS WORLD:

# India extends halt on futures trading in key farm commodities until January

December 23, 2024 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

MUMBAI — India extended the suspension of trading in derivative contracts for key farm commodities until January, as the world’s largest importer of vegetable oils and a major producer of wheat and rice seeks to curb food inflation.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) initially ordered a year-long suspension of futures trading in key farm commodities in 2021 — a significant move since futures trading was allowed in 2003.

The suspension was first extended until Dec. 20, 2023, and later to Dec. 20, 2024.

In a notification, SEBI said the suspension of trading in futures contracts would now continue until Jan. 31, 2025, on soybean and its derivatives, crude palm oil, wheat, paddy rice, chickpeas, green gram and rapeseed.

“Instead of extending the ban for a year as it did in the past two instances, it has extended it for only one month. This is a good sign. Perhaps futures trading will be allowed early next year,” said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trade house.

The Indian vegetable oil industry has been seeking the resumption of futures trading to help importers hedge their risks and provide oilseed growers with an indication of future price movements.

The resumption of futures trading in soybean, rapeseed, and their derivatives would help bring stability to oilseed prices, said B V Mehta, executive director of The Solvent Extractors’ Association of India.

India meets nearly two-thirds of its edible oil requirements through imports, primarily of palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as soy oil and sunflower oil from Argentina, Brazil, Russia, and Ukraine.

India's National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, which derives most of its volume from trading in farm commodities, was the most affected by the government's decision, followed by the Multi Commodity Exchange. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/12/23/642994/india-extends-halt-on-futures-trading-in-key-farm-commodities-until-january-2/>



**REMATE:**

# **Karagdagang NCR public markets kung saan magbebenta ng P40/kg na bigas alamin**

December 23, 2024 09:49



MANILA, Philippines- Pinalawig ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang Rice-for-All program nito sa karagdagang pampublikong pamilihan sa Metro Manila, upang mas maging accessible ang abot-kayang bigas sa mas maraming Pilipino.

Inanunsyo ng DA na apat pang Metro Manila markets ang mag-aalok na rin ng P40 kada kilo ng well-milled rice.

Kabilang sa bagong Rice-for-All locations ang Larangay Public Market sa Dagat-Dagatan, Caloocan; Phase 9 Bagong Silang Market, Caloocan; Cloverleaf Market, Balintawak, Quezon City; at New Marulas Public Market, Valenzuela City.

Sinimulang magbenta ng KADIWA ng Pangulo rice kiosks sa mga pamilihing ito ng P40 na bigas noong Sabado.

Bukas ang mga ito ng alas-4 ng madaling araw hanggang alas-6 ng hapon araw-araw, maliban sa Dec. 24 at 25, 30 at 31, 2024 at Jan. 1, 2025.

Binuksan din ang karagdagang KADIWA kiosks na nagbebenta ng P29 bigas sa Kamuning Market sa Quezon City, Pasay City Public Market at New Las Piñas City Market.

Inilunsad noong Agosto, nilalayon ng Rice-for-All program na makapagbigay ng abot-kayang rice options sa gitna ng pagtaas ng presyo ng nasabing bilihan.

“The DA is working closely with market leaders to expand the program further, with plans to establish more KADIWA ng Pangulo kiosks across Luzon and eventually nationwide,” pahayag ni Agriculture Assistant Secretary Genevieve Guevarra, namamahala sa KADIWA program. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/karagdagang-ncr-public-markets-kung-saan-magbebenta-ng-p40-kg-na-bigas-alam/>

**REMATE:**

# Pagsibak sa BFAR director pinagtibay ng Ombudsman

December 23, 2024 07:26

MANILA, Philippines- Nanindigan ang Office of the Ombudsman (OMB) sa desisyon nito na tanggalin sa pwesto si Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) National Director Demosthenes R. Escoto.

Sa walong pahinang joint order, ibinasura ng OMB ang apela ni Escoto na mabago ang naging kautusan ng OMB noong Feb. 5 na sibakin siya sa serbisyo dahil sa grave misconduct at conduct prejudicial to the service at ang pagsasampa sa kanya ng kasong katiwalian.

Iginiit ng OMB na mananatili ang kanilang Feb.5, 2024 resolution at decision.

Bahagyang binago rin ng OMB ang desisyon matapos ideklara na habang panahon nang ipinagbabawal si Escoto na makapagtrabaho sa anumang sangay ng gobyerno.

Sinabi ng Ombudsman na kasama sa pagsibak kay Escoto sa tungkulin ay ang pagkansela na rin sa karapatan na makapagtrabaho sa pamahalaan.

Nag-ugat ang kaso mula sa pagbili ng transmitters at transreceivers para sa Integrated Marine Environment Monitoring System Project Phase II (PHILO Project ng BFAR noong 2018.

Iginawad ang proyekto sa SRT-France, isang subsidiary company ng SRT-United Kingdom (SRT-UK) incorporated sa France. Ngunit idineklara ng French government (na siyang nagpautang sa Pilipinas para sa proyekto) na hindi kwalipikado sa naturang proyekto ang SRT-France sa ilalim ng termino ng pautang nito sa Pilipinas dahil ang SRT-France ay wala naman manufacturing at engineering facilities sa France.

Wala rin itong record of activities sa France.

Sinabi ng OMB na ang mga naging hakbang ni Escoto ang naging instrumento para magtagumpay ang maanomalyang transaksyon. **Teresa Tavares**

<https://remate.ph/pagsibak-sa-bfar-director-pinagtibay-ng-ombudsman/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# ‘New ASF zoning system will cut pork prices’

Ada Pelonia  
December 23, 2024

The Department of Agriculture (DA) will modify the zoning system for controlling and preventing the spread of African swine fever (ASF) to make it easier to transport pork and tame prices.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the agency is crafting a policy that will divide the classification into whether a province has ASF cases or not, scrapping the existing color coding system used to categorize areas with confirmed outbreaks of the disease.

“The new policy which we are currently crafting will be easier especially for farmers,” Laurel told reporters in an interview, adding that the existing color-coding system has been “stigmatized.”

“Some farmers do not want to report [fatalities] because they don’t want their areas to be classified as a red zone. That system already has a negative connotation with everybody, so we have to change it.”

The agriculture chief said areas tagged as red zones prevented the shipment of pork and prompted the culling of hogs within a 1-kilometer radius of the infected farm.

With the upcoming modified policy, he said local transport of pork from provinces with ASF cases would be allowed provided that the hogs will test negative for the disease, thus removing the imbalance in the supply chain.

“The idea is test and ship [...] That will basically stabilize the market for pork,” Laurel said, noting that the new system “should lower the average price of pork.”

He said the new policy could be released by January next year.

Laurel said vaccines against ASF will be available for commercial use by March 2025.

He 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.

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

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

The Bureau of Animal Industry data showed that 19 provinces and 88 municipalities have active ASF cases as of December 6.

[https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/23/new-asf-zoning-system-will-cut-pork-prices/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAAR228W9yaHb7uJGQbSanq3w5Q1gCUwgAf6AggVWjOPogdMrsVPXuGHTWJio\\_aem\\_dBpex8vqngZlg9k-MRykJw](https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/23/new-asf-zoning-system-will-cut-pork-prices/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAAR228W9yaHb7uJGQbSanq3w5Q1gCUwgAf6AggVWjOPogdMrsVPXuGHTWJio_aem_dBpex8vqngZlg9k-MRykJw)

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# Cold storage facility opens in Pampanga

VG Cabuag  
December 23, 2024

AyalaLand Logistics Holdings Corp. (ALLHC) opened its fifth cold storage facility, Artico Mabalacat, in Pampanga Technopark.

“By building this cold storage facility within our very own industrial park development, Pampanga Technopark, we reaffirm our commitment to providing exceptional service and setting new standards in the industrial and real estate logistics industry,” Patrick C. Avila, ALLHC COO, said.

The facility has 4,000 pallet positions across 19 cold rooms, with temperatures ranging from 5 degree Celcius to -25 degree Celcius.

This latest addition increases ALLHC’s portfolio to approximately 20,000 pallet positions, addressing the growing demand for temperature-controlled facilities in Central Luzon, the company said.

Serving industries including frozen meat, seafood, pharmaceutical and industrial, the facility will be registered with the Board of Investments and key regulatory agencies including the National Meat Inspection Service, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (Bfar), and the Bureau of Plant Industry.

“These facilities are vital in preserving the quality and safety of perishable goods, ensuring that we can meet the growing demand for products in both local and global markets,” Merry Jane Espinosa, Regional Fish Inspector, who represented Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Region 3 Regional Director, Wilfredo M. Cruz.

Artico Mabalacat is strategically located with easy access via expressways in northern and southern Luzon and MacArthur Highway; and is in close proximity to key infrastructure such as Clark International Airport of about 20 to 30 minutes and the Subic Bay International Terminal, about one hour.

ALLHC has recently completed the first phase of ALogis Mabalacat, a 7,700-square meter warehouse, with construction already underway for the second phase, which will add another 18,000 square meters of gross leasable area.

These ready-built facilities provide light to medium enterprises with the infrastructure needed to immediately launch operations, fostering business growth and economic activity in the region.

The company said the strategic integration of Artico Mabalacat cold storage facility and ALogis Mabalacat ready-built facilities bolsters the supply chain in Luzon by empowering businesses across various sectors and fostering a more efficient, sustainable distribution network within the region.

“This initiative also positions Pampanga Technopark as a pivotal player in addressing the nation’s increasing demand for streamlined and reliable logistics solutions, significantly contributing to the Philippines economic growth.”

[https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/23/cold-storage-facility-opens-in-pampanga/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAAR3hBvMMFJOybGlg856cBP2LGTFJBu6XoDDWpDRq9Nj82zbUoIR0m9MFTU\\_aem\\_U1-dwTnANY278unxz8VtxQ](https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/23/cold-storage-facility-opens-in-pampanga/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAAR3hBvMMFJOybGlg856cBP2LGTFJBu6XoDDWpDRq9Nj82zbUoIR0m9MFTU_aem_U1-dwTnANY278unxz8VtxQ)