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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **OCD: 300 hectares of crops damaged in Negros Island due to Kanlaon eruption**

**BY AARON RECUENCO**

Dec 26, 2024 12:42 PM

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Around 300 hectares crops were damaged in Negros Island as Kanlaon Volcano continues to unleash volcanic materials that also forced more than 45,000 persons from 32 barangays of Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental to flee their homes.

The Office of Civil Defense (OCD) said the latest data it received revealed that the damage to agriculture in the two provinces is now around P33.5 million, and that 830 farmers and fishermen were rendered jobless as a result of the eruptions since Dec. 9 when Kanlaon was placed under Alert Level 3.

The OCD said 34.54 hectares of crops have been reported as totally damaged while 263.51 hectares are partially damaged but have a chance of recovery.

In a statement, the OCD said the Department of Agriculture has started advising farmers and local government units to implement preparedness measures, including monitoring and dissemination of advisories. T

“They are also assessing damage and losses in the agriculture sector while coordinating with local agencies for effective response strategies,” OCD said.

The agency said the volcanic eruptions have created significant displacement and challenges for residents, adding that the affected populations span multiple barangays in the regions, necessitating immediate and ongoing support.

As of Thursday, Dec. 26, a total of 11,883 families, comprising 45,526 individuals, have been affected across 32 barangays in Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental.

Among those affected, 4,454 families, or 14,186 persons, are currently residing in 32 evacuation centers (ECs), while 2,185 families, totaling 6,953 individuals, are staying outside these centers.

The OCD, however, said that the 9,571 families that require assistance were already attended to with the downloading of around P123,691,278.86 in assistance packages.

On the part of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), it has prepositioned several funds to support relief efforts, including P31.96 million in Quick Response Funds (QRF) at the DSWD Central Office, P 5 million available at DSWD Field Offices P 40.88 million available in other areas.

The DSWD has also prepositioned essential supplies, with a total of 261,018 Family Food Packs (FFPs) available in Disaster Response Centers.

This includes 107,548 FFPs at the National Resource Operations Center (NROC) in Pasay City and 153,470 FFPs at the Visayas Disaster Resource Center (VDRC) in Mandaue City.

Additionally, there are 190,706 FFPs available at DSWD FOs VI and VII, and 1,056,003 FFPs in other DSWD FOs that can support the relief needs of families affected by the Kanlaon Volcano eruption.

The DSWD also ensured that P 873.13 million worth of other food and non-food items (FNIs) are available.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/12/26/300-hectares-of-crops-damaged-in-negros-island-due-to-kanlaon>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# DA chief targets rice pricing manipulation

BY JEL SANTOS

Dec 26, 2024 03:50 PM



DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. (JEL SANTOS/ MB FILE PHOTO)

The Department of Agriculture (DA) will be conducting an aggressive campaign against rice pricing manipulation following reports of alleged profiteering by some traders and retailers at the expense of Filipino consumers.

In a statement on Thursday, Dec. 26, DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said they have sufficient reasons to believe that some retailers and traders were intentionally misleading Filipino consumers through the use of branded imports to inflate rice prices after conducting several market visits.

Part of the solution, he said, is the removal of brand labels on imported rice.

He also directed the removal of labels such as “premium” and “special” from imported rice, saying these are being misused to inflate prices.

The DA noted that locally-produced rice will be exempt from the directive to protect Filipino farmers and their businesses.

“Importing rice is not a right but a privilege,” Laurel stressed.

“If traders are unwilling to follow our regulations, we will withhold permits for rice importation.”

Per the DA, data from the rice supply chain indicates that a ₱6 to ₱8 markup per kilo from the landed cost of imported rice is sufficient for sustainable profit. For instance, rice imported from Vietnam at an all-in cost of ₱40 per kilo should retail at no more than ₱48 per kilo.

To address rice price volatility, Laurel said he is exploring invoking a food security emergency under the amended Rice Tariffication Law, which would enable the release of National Food Authority (NFA) buffer stocks to stabilize market prices.

The DA is also considering allowing government corporations, such as Food Terminal Inc., to directly import large volumes of rice to compete with private importers.

Also, the agency's legal division has been tasked to assess whether the Consumer Price Act could be applied to counter acts of profiteering in the rice industry.

Despite President Marcos' move to reduce the rice tariff from 35 percent to 15 percent in July, prices of certain rice brands remain significantly high, frustrating both consumers and the government.

Laurel said he is also looking into enlisting the Department of Finance, particularly the Bureau of Internal Revenue, to audit the financial records of rice traders to ensure compliance with fair pricing practices. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has likewise been tapped to monitor rice prices in markets and groceries.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/12/26/da-czar-targets-rice-pricing-manipulation>

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**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Christmas and compassionate soul

[Korean Serenade - Lee Sang-Hwa](#) - The Philippine Star

December 26, 2024 | 12:00am

Christmas Day comes and goes, but its spirit lingers, bringing reflection, joy and hope. Christmas season always awakens an affective ambivalence in me as I recall my days in New York. On one hand, I fondly recall taking my daughters to Radio City Music Hall to watch the world-famous Rockettes perform their Christmas Spectacular, an extravaganza of music, circus, dance and magic. It created a lasting impression of our family bonding and happy times together.

But, as depicted in *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, the spirit of Christmas is not about wealth or extravaganza, but about love and the transformative power of compassion. When I was stationed at the United Nations headquarters, every day was a lesson in crisis management and problem solving on a global scale. Amid this stressful milieu, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the 8th UN Secretary-General, often reminded us to turn our thoughts to the value of human dignity. Citing the story of the Christmas Truce of 1914 – a poignant moment in the midst of World War I, when warring soldiers set aside their weapons to sing carols, exchange gifts and even play football in the no-man’s land between their trenches – he said, “Even in the depths of war, there is room for humanity and hope.”

I treasure these memories and today, as the Korean ambassador to the Philippines, I see them reflected in the vibrant and joyous ways Filipinos celebrate Christmas, which I find really amusing. It is the longest observance of Christmas, beginning on the first “-ber” month of September and ending on the Epiphany. And the warmth of colorful lanterns lighting up the streets and homes, the melodies of carolers filling the air – even in jeepneys stuck in traffic! – and the cherished family gatherings are uniquely Filipino. The festive air evokes in me the same joyous memories of my time in New York.

Just like Christmas in New York, beneath all the merriment lies something more profound in the Philippines: the spirit of bayanihan – community, generosity and love for one another. I find this communal spirit deeply inspiring every time I come across it in my dealings with Filipinos from all walks of life.

Early this month, I joined the distribution of Korean goods in Tondo, Manila, in an area that had been gutted by a conflagration. The Love Tondo Community Ministry, which has been operated by a Korean missionary, Ms. Kim Sook-hyang, for the past 20 years, provides after-school tutorials, meals and care for disadvantaged children. As I marveled at the residents’ resilience and perseverance, I learned that many of them, particularly the children, are fans of K-pop and K-drama, and they often draw strength from stories of overcoming adversity.

I also had the privilege of meeting farmers in Lucban, Quezon Province during the turnover ceremony of KOPIA (Korea Partnership for Innovation of Agriculture) greenhouses and post-harvest facilities. As the guest of honor, President Marcos said, “This initiative stands out because it emphasizes community empowerment.” As the President applauded, the project meant not just increasing productivity but also transforming lives and strengthening the agricultural sector. This is one of the hallmarks of Korea’s development cooperation – it encourages inclusivity by affording the beneficiaries a sense of fulfillment that comes with “owning” the project, thus reflecting the Filipino bayanihan ethos.

More recently, at a gathering of friends at the Department of Migrant Workers, empowering overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) took center stage. The event was timely as the Philippines was the first country

to send workers to Korea under the Employment Permit System (EPS), which is celebrating its 20th year. Moreover, the deployment of Filipino caregivers in August was the first time that Korean households opened their doors to foreign workers in a show of utmost trust, an acknowledgment of the unmatched caregiving Filipinos are known for. As a show of appreciation for this arrangement of mutual faith, the Sunfull Foundation, a Korean NGO committed to cross-ethnic inclusivity, launched the K-Respect campaign last year “to foster a culture of respect, acceptance and understanding in our society.” K-Respect especially benefits OFWs in Korea, as well as Koreans in the Philippines.

Evidently, at the heart of these experiences are the people, like the children, OFWs and farmers I met, whose empathy and resilience inspire progress and hope. Every visit to a community and every conversation with its residents has strengthened my conviction to the fundamental question: how do we build inclusive societies? How do we create communities rooted in *convivencia* – living together in peace and mutual respect? The answers lie in our daily choices, in planting seeds of goodwill and nurturing them with unwavering care.

As former Deputy Foreign Minister for Public Diplomacy, I firmly believe that all these are not merely government-to-government endeavors. People – regular, common folks – are the backbone of Korea-Philippines relations. Without their direct engagement, involvement and participation, our governments will not be able to achieve our missions. As such, I have always lived by the mantra: “To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart.”

I saw this in the story of Ms. Kim, lovingly called “Sharon Mom,” whose tireless dedication has brought joy to the children of Tondo. It was evident in KOPIA’s efforts – epitomized by its watchword “We work for the Filipino farmers” – to empower Filipino farmers with innovative solutions, fostering sustainable agriculture. And with the success of programs like the EPS, which has opened doors for OFWs and caregivers in Korea, we are able to embrace and celebrate their invaluable contributions that strengthen the bonds between our nations and peoples.

This year holds special significance for Korea and the Philippines as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of our diplomatic relations. From Filipinos answering the call during the Korean War to today’s collaborative efforts like the Korea-Philippines Free Trade Agreement, which comes into force on Dec. 31, our partnership has only grown stronger. The timing of this agreement is truly auspicious, coinciding with the New Year and promising to be a powerful impetus for trade, investment and deeper people-to-people and cultural connections.

As we close 2024 and step into 2025, let us pause and recognize the power of giving, the strength in unity and the hope that emerges when we join forces.

\* \* \*

Lee Sang-hwa is the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the Philippines.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/12/26/2409807/christmas-and-compassionate-soul>



**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Philippines dairy imports up 24% in 9 months

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

December 26, 2024 | 12:00am



Dairy purchases abroad from January to September reached 2.71 million MT, about 24.7 percent higher than the 2.17 million MT recorded in the same period last year, according to the National Dairy Authority (NDA).

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The country's dairy imports in the nine months through September rose by more than a fifth on an annual basis to over 2.7 million metric tons in liquid milk equivalent, driven by higher demand as world prices eased.

Dairy purchases abroad from January to September reached 2.71 million MT, about 24.7 percent higher than the 2.17 million MT recorded in the same period last year, according to the National Dairy Authority (NDA).

NDA data showed imports of major dairy products increased during the nine-month period, with milk and cream products jumping by 30 percent to 2.38 million MT from 1.83 million MT.

Skim milk imports, which accounted for 40 percent of total dairy purchases, grew by a quarter to 1.1 million MT from last year's 879,200 MT.

Purchases abroad of whey reached 567,920 MT, 44 percent higher than the 394,810 MT recorded volume last year.

Buttermilk and buttermilk powder imports, meanwhile, surged by 23.3 percent year-on-year to 329,720 MT from 267,390 MT.

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization earlier estimated that the Philippines' dairy imports this year would expand by at least 14 percent year-on-year by higher demand from food processors coupled by softer world market prices.

The international agency noted that there has been "increasing spending on food consumed out of home and the overall increased demand from the hotel, restaurant and institutional sector" in the Philippines.

The Philippines was cited as one of the countries that would contribute to the marginal increase in global dairy trade, which is estimated to inch up by 0.4 percent year-on-year to 85 million MT this year.

NDA data showed that the import cost per liter of dairy products during the nine-month period averaged at P22.52 per liter, 14 percent lower than last year's average of P26.19 per liter.

Value of dairy imports during the nine-month period remained relatively flat at \$1.07 billion compared to last year's \$1.06 billion.

The country imports virtually all of its dairy needs as local production remains miniscule.

Domestic dairy output from January to September grew by 12 percent year-on-year to 23,640 MT from 21,120 MT on the back of bigger dairy herd that expanded by more than half.

The NDA plans to hike the country's milk sufficiency ratio to five percent by 2028 from the current level of 1.5 percent.

Some of the agency's plans to achieve the target include expanding the national dairy herd, boosting milk yields, creating demand, raising public awareness and increasing farmers' incomes.

The NDA targets to grow the national dairy herd through stock farms, multiplier farms and nucleus farms.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/12/26/2409794/philippines-dairy-imports-24-9-months>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# 2024 a ‘perfect storm’ for agriculture – DA chief

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

December 26, 2024 | 12:00am



**Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel J.**

STAR / Jesse Bustos

MANILA, Philippines — The year 2024 has been a “perfect storm” for the agriculture sector amid the destruction brought by various calamities in the country, according to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

“This year was full of challenges, from the El Niño, La Niña and the devastation of various pests. This year was a perfect storm for the agriculture sector,” Tiu Laurel said in his Christmas message.

The successive typhoons from October to November also resulted in billions of damage to the farm sector with tropical cyclones Kristine, Leon, Marce, Nika, Ofel and Pepito battering the Philippines in a span of less than one month.

“Because of your (stakeholders) hard work, dedication and united action, we were able to overcome all of these challenges,” Tiu Laurel added.

At the same time, the agriculture chief thanked farmers, fisherfolk, farm workers, international partners and stakeholders for their contribution to the farm sector.

“Of course, (I would like to thank) my DA family from the central office, regional offices down to our agricultural attachés in different parts of the world. All your contributions, big or small, from the offices, farmlands and fishponds helped in the development of the sector,” he said.

Tiu Laurel acknowledged that the work will not end even if 2024 is coming to an end.

“I know our work will not end. We will face many challenges but I believe that we will overcome all of these, especially with our aim to harvest enough supply and bring food to the table of every Filipino family,” Tiu Laurel said.

Total rice imports reached 4.48 million metric tons (MT) as the DA assured the public of at least 90-day stocks by the end of 2024.

Based on latest data from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), at least 4.482 million MT of imported rice arrived in the country as of Dec. 12 as Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa has said that the total importation of the grains will reach 4.7 million MT this year.

This year’s rice imports already surpassed the total volume in 2023 by 24 percent as last year’s importation reached 3.607 million MT.

The bulk or 77 percent of the rice imports came from Vietnam, with a total volume of 3.436 million MT.

Other sources of rice imports include Thailand, 567,913 MT; Pakistan, 244,859 MT; Myanmar, 199,513 MT; India, 22,573 MT; China, 5,720 MT; Cambodia, 3,460 MT; Japan, 2,402 MT; Italy, 14 MT and Spain, 1.92 MT.

“We expect that by the end of the year, our national stock inventory will reach (an equivalent of) almost three months, good for another three months going into the lean season next year. So when we are in the lean months and we have no harvest until March and April, we will have enough stocks of rice,” De Mesa said.

He added that additional imported rice is also expected during the first quarter of 2025.

“We can expect good supply and stable retail price of rice for the first quarter next year,” he added.

Meanwhile, De Mesa assured the public of a steady supply of farm products until New Year as increase in the demand will continue until the end of the year.

“For our livestock like pork and chicken, our agri industry livestock players assured us that there will be no problem in the supply,” De Mesa said.

“When it comes to vegetables, we don’t have any problem in the supply,” he added.

However, the retail price of tomatoes remained high at P260 per kilo.

“The closed fishing season will also end in January and February 2025. We expect that the good harvest for fish will also return,” he added.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/12/26/2409878/2024-perfect-storm-agriculture-da-chief>

# Dairy imports surged 25% in Jan-Sept



BY JORDEENE B. LAGARE

DECEMBER 26, 2024

The volume of dairy products imported to the Philippines grew by almost a quarter in the nine months ending September despite an increase in local milk production.

The National Dairy Authority (NDA) said in a report that dairy imports totaled 2.8 billion liters as of end-September, an increment of 24.7 percent from 2.2 billion in the same period a year earlier.

The figure is 100 million liters away from 2023's dairy import volume of 2.9 billion liters.

In terms of value, dairy shipments bound for the archipelago rose by 3.5 percent to P61.09 billion from P59.02 billion.

Of the products brought in, skim milk accounted for 1.1 billion liters of the total, an increase of 25.57 percent.

Whey followed with 567.92 million liters and buttermilk or buttermilk powder with 329.72 million liters.

## Exports decreased

The majority of imported milk products came from New Zealand and the United States with a share of 29.2 percent and 24.5 percent, respectively.

On the other hand, dairy exports decreased by 13.5 percent to 31 million liters from 35.84 million liters. It is valued at P1.4 billion.

Domestic production jumped by 11.9 percent to 23.64 million liters from 21.12 million liters during the period.

"This growth highlights improvements in domestic output; however, the country remains heavily reliant on imports, which constituted 99.1 percent of the total milk supply," the NDA said.

The local output is valued at P1.3 billion, rising by 20.8 percent from P1.09 billion.

Meanwhile, the livestock inventory decreased by 1.5 percent to 9.05 million individuals as of September this year, yet the dairy animal inventory surged by 59.4 percent to 152,619 individuals.

Furthermore, the NDA also said the number of dairy entities it assisted increased by 25.8 percent to 1,355.

The NDA previously unveiled its strategic road map to increase the country's milk sufficiency to 5 percent by 2028 from the current level of 1.5 percent as of June this year.

As part of its blueprint for the dairy industry, the NDA is building stock farms in General Tinio in Nueva Ecija, Ubay in Bohol, Malaybalay in Bukidnon, Carmen in Cotabato and Prosperidad in Agusan del Sur.

It is also studying the development of the sixth stock farm in Roxas town in Palawan.

These farms will accommodate imported cattle to increase the existing herd of nearly 80,000, with the offspring being given to dairy farmers. Each farm could accommodate up to 150 cattle heads.

<https://plus.inquirer.net/business/dairy-imports-surged-25-in-jan-sept/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Imported rice labeling fools buyers into paying more, Agri dep't says

December 26, 2024 | 9:18 pm



A worker arranges sacks of rice. — PHILIPPINE STAR/WALTER BOLLOZOS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) announced a crackdown on imported rice labeling, saying some retailers are employing deceptive practices to jack up prices.

“After conducting a series of market visits, we now have reason to believe that some retailers and traders are intentionally confusing Filipino consumers with branded imports to justify the high prices of rice,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said in a statement Thursday.

The DA said the labeling practices are a means of “inflating prices and exploiting consumers.”

Ordering the removal of brand names, the DA also banned the use of marketing terms like “premium” and “special” in the imported-rice trade, which it said were pretexts for charging more.

“Importing rice is not a right but a privilege. If traders are unwilling to follow our regulations, we will withhold permits for rice imports,” Mr. Laurel said.

The DA called a markup of P6 to P8 per kilo from the landed cost of imported rice a reasonable profit beneficial to all.

The DA is also considering other measures to address price volatility, including invoking a food security emergency under the Rice Tariffication Law to allow for the release of rice held in reserve by the National Food Authority.

Mr. Laurel is also considering allowing Food Terminal, Inc., among others, to import significant quantities of rice to provide competition for private importers and to study whether the provisions of the Consumer Price Act can be activated to deal with profiteering.

He also proposed enlisting the departments of Finance and Trade in auditing the financial records of rice traders and in assisting in monitoring rice prices, respectively.

According to the DA, prices of some rice brands have remained stubbornly high despite the reduction of the rice tariff to 15% from 35% in July.

Special imported commercial rice sells for between P54 and P64, while imported premium and well-milled rice fetches P52-P60 and P40-P56, respectively, the DA reported on Dec. 20. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/12/26/643681/imported-rice-labeling-fools-buyers-into-paying-more-agri-dept-says/>



**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Big halal-certification push to position PHL to compete in \$7-trillion market

December 26, 2024 | 9:13 pm



**FREEPIK**

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said it plans to strengthen certification bodies for halal products next year to better position the Philippines to compete in the \$7-trillion global market.

“Another industry that we’re pushing is halal. It’s something that is going to be a priority for next year. The global market for halal is now \$7 trillion, so it is something that we can really push aggressively,” Trade Secretary Ma. Cristina A. Roque said at a briefing last week.

“All we need is to strengthen the certifying bodies for halal. We already have the products and the companies that have these products and are willing to go halal. So we just need to get certifying bodies that are accepted in the Middle East market,” she added.

“Certification is the key to exporting these products to the countries that want them,” she said.

She said the DTI has been inviting halal certifying bodies in the Middle East to establish offices in the Philippines.

“There are also halal trade shows to which we invite local and international buyers because there’s also a market for halal here in Mindanao,” she said.

She said that the DTI is in talks with exporters to include halal products in their offerings, citing the opportunity to break into new markets.

She said she will personally oversee the halal effort.

“Halal will be under the office of the Secretary. It is going to be part of special concerns because I want an aggressive approach and I want to be on top of pushing halal locally and for export,” she said.

She said that there are only 20 halal certifying bodies in the Philippines. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/12/26/643680/big-halal-certification-push-to-position-phl-to-compete-in-7-trillion-market/>

**REMATE:**

# Inflation posibleng manatili sa 2.6% ngayong Disyembre

December 26, 2024 10:15



MANILA, Philippines – Posibleng manatili sa 2.6 percent ngayong buwan ang headline inflation na pasok pa rin sa 2 percent hanggang 4 percent na target range ng pamahalaan.

“Inflation could remain relatively benign and still well within the BSP’s inflation target of 2 to 4 percent, largely due to lower rice prices, which account for 9 percent of the CPI (consumer price index) basket due to [a] lower tariff on imported rice,” pahayag ni Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. chief economist Michael Ricafort sa panayam ng Philippine News Agency nitong Miyerkules, Disyembre 25.

Matatandaan na bigas ang naging ‘significant driver’ ng inflation mula pa noong Setyembre 2023.

Para mapababa ang presyo ng bigas, pinirmahan at inisyu ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang Executive Order (EO) 62, series of 2024 sa Comprehensive Tariff Program 2024-2028 noong Hunyo 20

Ipinatupad noong Hulyo, sakop ng EO ang pagpapababa sa taripa ng imported na bigas mula 35 percent patungong 15 percent.

Hanggang noong Nobyembre, patuloy sa pagbaba ang rice inflation mula 22.5 percent noong Hunyo ay nagging 5.1 percent na lamang.

Bukod sa mababang presyo ng bigas, possible ring bumaba sa 2.5 month lows ang global crude oil prices.

“Other major global commodity prices are among the lowest in 3 to 4 years amid softer economic data in China, which is the world’s second-biggest economy and biggest importer of oil and other major global commodities,” ani Ricafort.

“This would help support relatively benign inflation in many countries around the world, at or near central bank inflation targets that could help justify future Fed rate cuts that could be matched locally.”

Sa kabila nito, ang seasonal increase sa demand at paggastos ngayong holiday season ay maaari ring magresulta sa pagtaas ng presyo ng mga bilingin.

Ang December 2024 inflation data ay ilalabas ng Philippine Statistics Authority sa unang linggo ng Enero.

“For the coming months, it is possible for inflation to sustain at 2 percent levels up to early 2025, or well within the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas’ inflation target range of 2 to 4 percent,” ayon kay Ricafort. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/inflation-posibleng-manatili-sa-2-6-ngayong-disyembre/>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# PH dairy logs growth in Jan-Sept

**[By Giselle P. Jordan](#)**

**December 26, 2024**

THE Philippine dairy industry experienced growth in the first three quarters of this year compared to the same period last year, according to a report by the National Dairy Authority (NDA).

While livestock inventory dropped by 1.5 percent from around 9.18 million heads in 2023 to 9.05 million heads in 2024, the dairy inventory posted a "remarkable increase" of 59.4 percent to 152,619 heads in 2024 from 95,749 heads in 2023, the NDA said.

It added that the number of cows and does rose by more than a thousand heads, from 33,792 in 2023 to 34,875 this year, reflecting a year-on-year growth of 3.2 percent. This growth was complemented by a 25.8 percent increase in DA-assisted dairy entities from 1,077 in 2023 to 1,355 this year, the agency said.

Local milk production also grew by volume to a total of 23.64 million liters compared to last year's 21.12 million liters, or an increase of 11.9 percent.

"This growth highlights improvements in domestic output; however, the country remains heavily reliant on imports," the NDA said, noting that imports made up 99.1 of the Philippines' milk supply. Imports shot up 24.7 percent to 2.71 billion liters, with the increase coming primarily from the importation of skim milk powder, growing by 40.7 percent to 1.104 billion liters this year from 879.2 million liters in 2023. Imports of other powdered and ready-to-drink (RTD) milk also increased by 16 percent and 3.3 percent, respectively, while imports of other dairy products soared 40 percent to 1.08 billion liters.

Conversely, the NDA said dairy exports declined 13.5 percent to 31 million liters.

By value, local milk production grew 20.8 percent to P1.31 billion, while dairy imports increased 3.5 percent to P61.09 billion.

Meanwhile, the country saw changes in dairy import sourcing as the share of supply from the top two source countries went down to 53.74 this year from 56.55 percent last year, the agency said.

The NDA also underscored that while there have been significant improvements in local dairy production, challenges remain due to the country's dependence on dairy imports.

[https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/26/business/top-business/ph-dairy-logs-growth-in-jan-sept/2027415?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR3FTide8UCr5bHxJKPRI5qrqJeQR59UO5vQB1FILNccyLrs9MPVYAtrE\\_aem\\_prOPSUZtCfPXXM\\_Sxl5ICA](https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/26/business/top-business/ph-dairy-logs-growth-in-jan-sept/2027415?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR3FTide8UCr5bHxJKPRI5qrqJeQR59UO5vQB1FILNccyLrs9MPVYAtrE_aem_prOPSUZtCfPXXM_Sxl5ICA)

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# MMSU pushing off-season tomato variety

**By Leander C. Domingo**  
**December 26, 2024**

A HYBRID tomato variety developed by the Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU) has proven resilient amid the wet season and back-to-back typhoons this year.

Jesslyn Keith Valite of MMSU Strategic Communication Office said this was showcased during a technology demonstration on Dec. 16 at Pastor Wilmar Miguel's farm in Barangay Saricao in Vintar, Ilocos Norte, proving that fresh tomatoes can be enjoyed year-round.

Valite said the technology demonstration event was a collaboration involving MMSU through its Research and Extension Directorate, the Ilocos Norte provincial government through the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist, and the local government unit of Vintar.

MMSU Extension Director Marilou Lucas, Research Director Dionisio Bucao, Planning Director Marlowe Aquino, Monitoring and Evaluation Chief Sherlyn Nicolas, and other staff from the Research and Extension directorates joined the event.



Despite the wet season and back-to-back typhoons this year, the MMSU hybrid off-season tomatoes proved resilient. This was showcased during a technology demonstration at Pastor Wilmar Miguel's

farm in Barangay Saricao, Vintar, Ilocos Norte, on Dec. 16, 2024, proving fresh tomatoes can be enjoyed year-round. MMSU PHOTO

Farmers from the towns of Vintar, Burgos, Sarrat and Pasuquin in Ilocos Norte, along with agricultural technologists from their respective municipalities, also participated in the activity.

Valite said the tomatoes harvested at the event were planted in September using MMSU's adaptable hybrid varieties (Varieties 1 and 3), specifically developed to thrive in the Ilocos Region's climate.

She said the demonstration highlighted efficient farming techniques, such as mulching, trellising and precise nutrient management.

For her part, Lucas pointed out that the successful cultivation of off-season tomatoes could significantly enhance the livelihoods of local farming communities.

"With the consistent application of MMSU's technology, the production of this tomato variety could achieve even greater success," she said.

Miguel believes that cultivating MMSU hybrid off-season tomatoes has the potential to improve farmers' livelihoods due to their "high yield and strong consumer preference."

Serving as the farmer-partner in demonstrating the viability of growing off-season tomatoes, he emphasized the importance of ensuring the successful reproduction of this variety and advocated for its widespread distribution and production.

In 2021, Miguel graduated from MMSU's School-on-the-Air (SOA) program, and since then, he and his team have actively participated in various university extension projects.

Launched in 2016, the MMSU SOA program has been dedicated to empowering farmers by enhancing their knowledge and skills in modern agricultural practices.

Valite said the initiative provides science-based, practical training to farmers across the region, promoting growth and innovation in agriculture.

[https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/26/business/agribusiness/mmsu-pushing-off-season-tomato-variety/2027410?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR3hBvMMFJOybGlg856cBP2LGTf\\_JBu6XoDDWpDRq9Nj82zbUoIR0m9MFTU\\_aem\\_U1-dwTnANY278unxz8VtxQ](https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/26/business/agribusiness/mmsu-pushing-off-season-tomato-variety/2027410?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR3hBvMMFJOybGlg856cBP2LGTf_JBu6XoDDWpDRq9Nj82zbUoIR0m9MFTU_aem_U1-dwTnANY278unxz8VtxQ)

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Cagayan town gets HDPE fish cage project

**By Leander C. Domingo**  
**December 26, 2024**

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in Region 2 installed a P1-million circular high-density polyethylene (HDPE) fish cage that is part of the agency's aim to redefine aquaculture development in rural areas.

The fisheries bureau said the HDPE fish cage project at Barangay Bessang in Allacapan, Cagayan province, was the third unit awarded to the local government that will be operated and managed by the Bessang Small Water Irrigation System Association (Bswisa).

BFAR awarded the first two units of HDPE fish cages to the Napuaran Farmers Association in August 2023.



In its bid to redefine aquaculture development in rural areas, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Region 2 installed a circular high-density polyethylene fish cage in Barangay Bessang in Allacapan, Cagayan province. **BFAR PHOTO**

According to the DA, the BFAR will provide input assistance such as 12,000 pieces of fingerlings for initial stocking, feeds, technical assistance, and capability training on the operation and management of the HDPE fish cages.

Likewise, members of the Bswisa will also be oriented on financial literacy after the training.

According to the BFAR, the introduction of circular HDPE fish cages in lakes and small water impounding projects in 2023 has "transformed aquaculture in rural areas, offering a sustainable and efficient solution for fish farming."



It said these cages are designed for durability, flexibility and ease of maintenance, making them ideal for challenging rural environments, especially in areas frequently visited by typhoons like the Cagayan Valley.

"The HDPE cages, which were made from recyclable materials, promote eco-friendly practices, and their design minimizes the impact on surrounding aquatic ecosystems by reducing feed waste and debris," BFAR said.

It added that these cages are lightweight yet sturdy, making them easy to transport and install in remote areas and suitable for a variety of water bodies, including lakes, reservoirs and rivers commonly found in rural regions.

Meanwhile, the Bessang Small Water Impounding Project, with a water area of 7 hectares, has access to the national highway, making it a feasible site for the fish cage project.

"It will cater to the fish requirement of the municipality and neighboring town of Ballesteros and, at the same time, will provide a lucrative income for the association members," BFAR said.

The HDPE fish cage has an initial stock of 12,000 pieces of tilapia fingerlings and is expected to yield 2.4 metric tons of marketable size of tilapia, which can be sold at a farm gate price of P110 a kilo after four months of culture.

To date, there are 572 registered fisherfolk in the municipality operating 107,756 hectares of fishponds.

[https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/26/business/agribusiness/cagayan-town-gets-hdpe-fish-cage-project/2027402?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAAR3hBvMMFJOybGlg856cBP2LGTfJBu6XoDDWpDRq9Nj82zbUoIR0m9MFTU\\_aem\\_U1-dwTnANY278unxz8VtxQ](https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/26/business/agribusiness/cagayan-town-gets-hdpe-fish-cage-project/2027402?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAAR3hBvMMFJOybGlg856cBP2LGTfJBu6XoDDWpDRq9Nj82zbUoIR0m9MFTU_aem_U1-dwTnANY278unxz8VtxQ)

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# **ATI provides P150K assistance to youth farmers**

**By Giselle P. Jordan**  
**December 26, 2024**

SOME 145 youth beneficiaries received P150,000 in assistance from the Department of Agriculture-Agriculture Training Institute (DA-ATI) at the 1st National Youth Internship Program (Yipoa) Graduation held recently at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) in Pasay City.

The beneficiaries are graduates of Yipoa, a 21-month internship program where youth from various parts of the country got practical and field-based learning under the guidance of mentors and DA-ATI's farmer-partners.

The internship program included training in agricultural processes such as organic crop production and management, livestock raising, fishery, natural fertilizer and pesticide production, food processing, and farm machinery operation and troubleshooting, among others.

The P150,000 grant was given by the ATI to serve as starting capital for the farm businesses that the graduates' are planning to launch in the near future.

The Yipoa is an initiative by the DA, ATI, and the National Organic Agriculture Program (NOAP). Together with their farm partners across the country, the program aims to promote sustainable and organic farming and encourage the youth to go into agriculture.

[https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/26/business/agribusiness/ati-provides-p150k-assistance-to-youth-farmers/2027401?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR3FTide8UCr5bHxJKPRIf5grqJeQR59UO5vQB1FILNccyLrs9MPVYAtR\\_E\\_aem\\_prOPSUZtCfPXXM\\_Sx15ICA](https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/26/business/agribusiness/ati-provides-p150k-assistance-to-youth-farmers/2027401?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR3FTide8UCr5bHxJKPRIf5grqJeQR59UO5vQB1FILNccyLrs9MPVYAtR_E_aem_prOPSUZtCfPXXM_Sx15ICA)

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Training for Calabarzon cacao farmers held

**By Giselle P. Jordan**  
**December 26, 2024**

THE Department of Agriculture (DA), through the Philippine Rural Development Project Regional Project Coordination Office Calabarzon (PRDP 4A), conducted training on cacao production and processing and internal capitalization for the region.

PRDP 4A hopes the training will equip farmers' organizations with technical knowledge and skills to improve their processing projects and business operations.

The members of the Cacao Growers Association of Lopez (CGAL) of Lopez, Quezon, and the Luisiana Cacao Grower Producers Cooperative (LCGPC) of Luisiana, Laguna, were taught how to harvest cacao fruits properly, prevent pest infestation and plant illnesses and cure them, and assess the quality of the fruits.

They also learned how to manage a cacao plantation and how to make their cacao processing more organized and efficient.

The LCGPC and the Samahan ng Maggagatas ng Batangas Dairy Cooperative (Samabaco) of Tanauan, Batangas, also attended the training on internal capitalization under one of PRDP's partners, Agriterra.

The training aims to help organizations like the LCGPC and Samabaco form strategies to grow their capital and prepare them for additional funding opportunities from financial institutions.

Samabaco President Maria Teresa Magpantay thanked the PRDP for the training.

"We have so much to thank DA-PRDP for because, aside from the facilities and equipment that we received for our production and processing, it continuously helps us so that our business would keep on going and keep on growing," she said.

[https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/26/business/agribusiness/training-for-calabarzon-cacao-farmers-held/2027400?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR3FTide8UCr5bHxJKPRI5grqJeQR59UO5vQB1FILNccyLrs9MPVYAtrE\\_aem\\_prOPSUZtCfPXXM\\_Sxl5ICA](https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/12/26/business/agribusiness/training-for-calabarzon-cacao-farmers-held/2027400?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR3FTide8UCr5bHxJKPRI5grqJeQR59UO5vQB1FILNccyLrs9MPVYAtrE_aem_prOPSUZtCfPXXM_Sxl5ICA)