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MANILA BULLETIN:

Marcos signs 2025 national budget; vetoes P194-B items

BY BETHEENA UNITE

Dec 30, 2024 12:00 PM

After much controversy, President Marcos signed the 2025 national budget on Monday, Dec. 30, disclosing that he vetoed P194 billion worth of line items.



President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. speaks during the ceremonial signing of the 2025 national budget at the Malacañan Palace on Dec. 30, 2024. (MANILA BULLETIN | Mark Balmores)

The signing of the General Appropriations Act (GAA) for the Fiscal Year 2025 came after undergoing a 10-day scrutiny led by the President and his Cabinet.

With the vetoed items, the final budget for next year was slightly reduced to P6.326 trillion from the proposed P6.352 trillion budget.

"[A]fter an exhaustive and thorough review, we have directly vetoed over 194 billion worth of the line items that are not consistent with our programmed priorities. These include allocations for certain programs and projects of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and those under the Unprogrammed Appropriations, which increased by 300 percent," Marcos disclosed.

According to Department of Budget Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah Pangandaman, the vetoed items include P26 billion under the DPWH and P168 billion unprogrammed projects—these were directly vetoed by the President, which means that the items were totally deleted from the national budget, including the allocations, making the 2025 GAA lower than the proposed version.

Pangandaman explained during a press briefing shortly after the ceremonial signing of the budget that the vetoed items from the DPWH involve projects considered as totally not supportive of the administration's economic agenda, projects that need to be scrutinized, and those that are not ready for implementation.

Rejecting items under the unprogrammed projects, Pangandaman also stressed, was consistent with the standard of allocating only five percent of the budget into unprogrammed projects, which are usually contingency funds.

In his speech, Marcos said the government shall also pursue conditional implementation on certain items to ensure that the people's funds are utilized in accordance with their authorized purposes.

There are 12 government programs that would be under conditional implementation. These are projects from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), DPWH, Ombudsman, Department of Agriculture (DA), Judiciary, National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Fund, Bureau of Customs (BOC), and the Congress.

Some of these programs under conditional implementation include funds for rewards incentives, retirement and pensions, maintenance and other operations, cash allocations, among others.

Marcos also said he was aware that there have been calls to reenact the 2024 budget, considering the delay in the signing and the issues surrounding it. However, he said it was not an option as it would only set the country back.

"There were calls to veto the entire budget and to revert to a reenacted one. However, this is not an option that we can afford. A reenacted budget will set us back, delay our vital programs, jeopardize targets for economic growth, including our goals of achieving single-digit poverty levels, and upper-middle-income status," he stressed.

"However, the Executive Branch is one with the people in raising concerns over appropriations that are not consistent with the country's development plan and responsive to the needs of the people. After all, it is our people whom we serve," he assured.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/12/30/marcos-signs-2025-national-budget-vetoes-p194-b-items>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA to finalize rice branding issues in January

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

December 30, 2024 | 12:00am



Workers are seen unloading sacks of rice in Tondo, Manila on November 19, 2024.

STAR / Ryan Baldemor

MANILA, Philippines — Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. will lead a meeting on Jan. 3 that will finalize a plan to remove branding on rice after he said that retailers and traders are intentionally confusing consumers with premium rice imports to justify the high prices of the grains.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said that Tiu Laurel wants to standardize the labeling of rice so that consumers will not be shortchanged by unscrupulous traders.

“We expect that this (new labeling) will be implemented as soon as possible. As a matter of fact, the secretary already called for a meeting to discuss the issue and immediately release guidelines on this,” de Mesa said.

De Mesa said that Tiu Laurel personally uncovered during his inspection of various markets in Metro Manila the problem of the branding of imported rice.

“He discovered, during the inspection of a particular imported rice he is very familiar with, that the landed cost of the imported rice is only P40 per kilo but it is sold in the market for more than P60 per kilo. The profit margin is so big,” he said.

He added that based on the consultation of the Department of Agriculture (DA) with traders and importers, they have already profited if at least P6 to P8 per kilo will be added to the landed cost of the imported staple.

“If it’s (landed cost) P40 (per kilo), the retail price should only be P48, so one of the solutions is to remove the branding on premium and special rice,” he explained.

He added that imported rice is classified through the degree of brokenness.

“It’s five percent for premium. There are also 15 percent, 25 percent and 100 percent broken, but when sold in the market, it is not being treated as 100 percent broken and instead (it is being treated) by the brand. Traders usually label the rice as premium and special,” de Mesa said.

The agriculture official added that in the past, the DA’s focus was only regular and well-milled rice as ordinary consumers often buy them since the two are cheaper.

Tiu Laurel said locally-produced rice will be exempted from this rule to protect Filipino farmers and traders.

The meeting will include the Bureau of Plant Industry and the National Food Authority (NFA) to assess the national rice situation.

De Mesa added that the DA sees the retail price of rice to further go down in 2025 amid the downward trend in international prices.

“We are expecting that by January, the price of imported rice in the world market will further decrease. Hopefully, this will be reflected in the local market,” he said.

De Mesa further stated that Tiu Laurel has asked the Bureau of Internal Revenue to examine the books of the importers and traders to determine if they are paying the right taxes.

Tiu Laurel has said the DA can invoke a food security emergency under the amended Rice Tariffication Law, which would allow the release of buffer stocks from the NFA to stabilize prices.

He added that the DA is exploring the option of allowing government corporations like Food Terminal Inc. to import significant quantities of rice to compete directly with private importers.

The agriculture chief also ordered the DA legal division to study whether provisions of the Consumer Price Act could be activated to deal with the seeming acts of profiteering.

Tiu Laurel noted that despite President Marcos' reduction of the rice tariff to 15 percent from 35 percent in July, prices of rice have remained stubbornly high, frustrating both the government and consumers.

He also asked the Department of Trade and Industry to assist in monitoring the prices of rice in markets and groceries.

Chaos

Farmers' group Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) national manager Raul Montemayor yesterday warned that the plan of the DA to remove branding on rice will further cause chaos on the pricing of the staple.

"If you remove the brand, how can consumers determine the kind of rice they are procuring?" Montemayor asked.

The group's leader was reacting to the announcement of Tiu Laurel that he plans to remove branding on rice after he said that retailers and traders are intentionally confusing consumers with premium rice imports to justify the high prices of the grains.

"They (officials of the DA) are just looking for a reason why the retail price of rice remains high. They failed to pinpoint the cause. (If) that's (removing branding of rice) their solution, it may only further cause chaos in the pricing (of the grains)," he said in a radio interview.

"They are pressured to address the high retail prices but forgot to help the local farmers," he further stated.

Montemayor said it should be the economic managers who should be made accountable after Executive Order 62 failed to bring down the retail price of rice despite the decision to lower the tariff on imported rice to 15 percent from the previous 35 percent.

"We are telling the DA that it did not create the problem. The economic managers were behind the lower tariff, which failed to address the high retail price of the rice but it is the DA who is finding a solution. They should instead focus on the problems of the farmers," the FFF leader added.

"It is easy to pinpoint (who is manipulating the retail price of rice) as once the imported rice arrives, the importer declares how much he spent to bring in the imported rice. The Bureau of Customs has records. If the importer sells to the wholesaler, it has a receipt from the Bureau of Internal Revenue," he noted.

Montemayor added that the wholesalers also have receipts of how much they sold the imported grains to the retailers.

"There are receipts so it is easy to determine who is manipulating (the retail price of rice). As of now, the retailers are being blamed, but based on the data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, the profiteering comes from the importers and wholesalers and not the retailers," he added.

Based on the monitoring of the DA in Metro Manila markets, the retail price of imported regular milled rice is sold for as high as P45 per kilo; imported well-milled rice, as high as P56 per kilo; imported premium rice, as high as P60 per kilo and imported special rice, as high as P64 per kilo.

Meanwhile, former senator Francis Pangilinan has expressed full support for the government's plan to declare a "food security emergency" as part of efforts to curb the prices of rice, which is a primary driver of inflation and a burden to many Filipinos.

Pangilinan said the government must exhaust all possible measures to lower rice prices.

"We fully support the government's actions aimed at easing the burden of our countrymen who are already suffering from the high price of rice," he said, referring to Tiu Laurel's plan to declare a food security emergency.

Pangilinan served as a food security czar from June 2014 to September 2015 under the administration of the late president Benigno Aquino III. During his tenure, he reduced rice prices up to P3 per kilo by interventions that rice inflation reduced from 15 percent to 0.8 percent in a span of one year. This, in turn, brought down nationwide inflation to its lowest rate in 20 years. — **Cecille Suerte Felipe**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/12/30/2410696/da-finalize-rice-branding-issues-january>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Pineapple exports may hit record high this year

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

December 30, 2024 | 12:00am



The Philippines' total pineapple exports may reach 692,365 MT by the end of the year, nearly 16 percent higher than last year's 598,077 MT.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines' pineapple exports may hit a record high of over 690,000 metric tons (MT) this year, driven by better output and higher demand abroad, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The Philippines' total pineapple exports may reach 692,365 MT by the end of the year, nearly 16 percent higher than last year's 598,077 MT. The latest estimate is also a quarter higher than the average shipment of 550,457 MT from 2018 to 2022.

With the latest estimates, the Philippines is expected to retain its title as the world's second biggest exporter of pineapples behind Costa Rica.

FAO said the Philippines' pineapple exports rose by three percent year-on-year in the eight months through August, driven by higher shipments to China.

China is the Philippines' top market for pineapple exports, cornering at least 40 percent of the market share.

Chinese consumers continue to buy more premium pineapples especially with the MD2 variety from the Philippines.

"Futher key import markets for pineapples from the Philippines remained Japan and South Korea over the first eight months of 2024 at quantity shares of some 33 percent and 16 percent, respectively," the FAO said.

"Shipments of Filipino pineapples to both destinations expanded substantially from the previous year by 28 percent to Japan and 37 percent to South Korea," it said.

The FAO noted that the average export unit value of Philippine pineapples from January to August posted a five percent increase year-on-year to \$617 per MT.

The expansion in pineapple production and shipments of the Philippines and Costa Rica, the world's top exporter, could drive global pineapple exports this year by about four percent on an annual basis to 3.3 million MT, it said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/12/30/2410572/pineapple-exports-may-hit-record-high-year>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DBM: 12 programs subject to ‘conditional implementation’ in 2025

By: [Luisa Cabato](#) - Reporter / [@luisacabatoINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 01:49 PM December 30, 2024



Photo from Official Gazette/Website

MANILA, Philippines — Twelve government programs, including the Department of Social Welfare and Development’s (DSWD) Ayuda para sa Kapos ang Kita Program (AKAP), are subject to “conditional implementation” under the 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA), the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday approved the national budget for next year, which was reduced to P6.326 trillion.

The reduction followed the veto of P194-billion line items from the initial P6.352-trillion proposal.

In a press briefing after the ceremonial signing, Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman explained that items under “conditional implementation” would require issuing guidelines or compliance with relevant laws, policies, and regulations.

Article continues after this advertisement



Below are the 12 programs subject to conditional implementation.

- **DSWD-Office of the Secretary (OSEC) Special Provision (SP) on AKAP: Its enforcement shall comply with guidelines issued jointly by the DSWD, Department of Labor and Employment, and National Economic and Development Authority.**
- **DSWD-OSEC SP on the “PAyapa at MASaganang PamayaNAn Program”:** Implementation shall follow guidelines jointly issued by the DSWD and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity.
- **DPWH-OSEC SP on the “Basic Infrastructure Program”:** Must comply with the Local Government Code of 1991.

- **UA SP on “Support to Foreign-Assisted Projects”:** This shall not limit the President’s authority to contract foreign loans under Section 20, Article VII of the 1987 Constitution.
- **Office of the Ombudsman SP on “Payment of Retirement Benefits and Pensions”:** Implementation must align with Republic Act No. 11059.
- **Office of the Ombudsman SP on “Release of Payment of Retirement Benefits and Pensions”:** Enforcement must comply with Republic Act No. 11059.
- **The Judiciary-Supreme Court of the Philippines and Lower Courts SP on “Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses of the Lower Courts”:** Allocation shall follow standards prescribed by the Supreme Court for lower courts.
- **Department of Agriculture (DA)-OSEC SP on the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund.**
- **UA SP on “Use of Excess Revenue from the Total Annual Tariff Revenue from Rice Importation”:** Implementation shall adhere to guidelines set by the DA, Department of Finance (DOF), and other concerned agencies.
- **Calamity Fund SP under the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Program.**
- **DOF-Bureau of Customs SP on the “Rewards and Incentives Fund”:** Must comply with the Attrition Act of 2005 and its implementing rules and regulations.
- **Congress of the Philippines SP on the “Availability of Appropriations and Cash Allocations”:** Enforcement must align with the General Provision on the Cash Budgeting System under the GAA.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2019934/dbm-12-programs-subject-to-conditional-implementation-in-2025>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Tariffs saved on banana exports to South Korea estimated at \$189M

December 30, 2024 | 7:42 pm



BW FILE PHOTO

THE PHILIPPINES is expected to book savings worth \$189 million on banana exports over five years as the Philippines-South Korea free trade agreement (FTA) comes into force, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said.

Export Marketing Bureau Director Bianca Pearl R. Sykimte said that the FTA will immediately reduce tariffs for Philippine banana exports by 6 percentage points this year.

“And that will be 12 percentage points by Jan. 1, 2025. Because when we implement FTAs, year 1 will always be the date of entry into force, and year 2 will always be Jan. 1,” she told reporters in an online briefing last week.

“If we base it on Korea’s \$210-million imports of bananas from us, approximately, we have \$12.6 million in tariff savings per year because of the tariff reduction. By year 2, we will have over \$25 million in tariff savings,” she added.

Trade Undersecretary Ceferino S. Rodolfo said that the FTA will reduce the Philippines’ tariff disadvantage against South Korea’s other FTA partners.

“For example, Vietnam. By next year, Vietnam will have 0% duty on its bananas shipped to Korea. For us, that is 30% without the FTA,” Mr. Rodolfo said.

In 2012, the Philippines used to account for 98.2% of South Korea’s banana imports. However, this fell to 69.1% last year after other countries secured lower tariffs through FTAs.

The DTI reported that Costa Rica, Honduras, Peru, and Vietnam enjoy zero duty on their banana exports to South Korea, while Australia and Panama are charged 6% and 8% tariffs on their banana exports.

Under the pre-FTA regime bananas from the Philippines and Cambodia are subject to a 30% tariff.

“Since it became zero-duty for some of our competitors, like Vietnam, Costa Rica, and Peru, they were able to gain significant market share in the Korean market. So, we lost about 29% of the market,” Ms. Sykimte said.

Aside from bananas, she said that there will also be gains in other industries such as machinery, transport equipment, and garments.

The DTI estimates that the Philippines’ \$9 million worth of machinery and transport equipment exports will be subject to tariff elimination in five to 10 years, while its \$9-million exports of garments will be subject to tariff elimination in three years.

Asked if the tariff savings will affect prices of goods from Korea, Ms. Sykimte said: “It would depend on the business model involved — if they pass the savings on to the supply chain to charge the consumer less,” she said.

Mr. Rodolfo said that the level of competition in the Philippine consumer market will also be a factor on whether the tariff savings will be reflected in the prices of goods.

“In the first place, the tariff for all of the products where the Philippines gave concessions is already low, as they are also covered under the ASEAN-Korea FTA and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership,” he said.

“I think most of them have 5% duty. So, if they get lower tariffs, it will only have a minimal impact. If there will be tariff savings, I think they will pass it on to the consumers,” he added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/12/30/644133/tariffs-saved-on-banana-exports-to-south-korea-estimated-at-189m/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Pineapple exports to grow 16% in 2024 — FAO

December 30, 2024 | 7:41 pm



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

PINEAPPLE exports from the Philippines are expected to grow 15.8% to 692,365 tons this year due to favorable growing conditions, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations said.

According to the FAO's Major Tropical Fruits Market Review, global exports of pineapples are expected to grow 4% to 3.3 million tons in 2024.

“(This is) determined largely by higher supplies from Costa Rica and the Philippines, the world’s leading exporters, with market shares of around 65% and 21%, respectively,” the FAO said.

According to the FAO, preliminary trade data as of August show a 3% year-on-year increase in pineapple shipments to China, the leading recipient of pineapples from the Philippines.

China is the third-leading global importer of pineapples. Despite having the capacity to produce around 2 million tons of pineapples annually, the FAO said that changing consumer preferences, such as growing demand for premium pineapples, drove China’s growth in imports.

According to the FAO, the MD2 variety of pineapples from the Philippines is highly sought after in China.

“Further key import markets for pineapples from the Philippines remained Japan and the Republic of Korea over the first eight months of 2024, at quantity shares of some 33% and 16%, respectively,” it said.

“Shipments of Filipino pineapples to both destinations expanded substantially from the previous year, by a reported 28% to Japan and 37% to Korea,” it added.

According to the FAO, the average export unit value of shipments from the Philippines to world markets stood at \$617 per ton during the first eight months, a year-on-year increase of 5%.

Meanwhile, pineapple shipments from Costa Rica are expected to rise 3% to 2.1 million tons. These mostly go to the US and European Union.

“The average export unit value of shipments from Costa Rica to world markets stood at \$564 per ton over the first eight months of 2024, a year-on-year increase of 3%,” according to the report.

The report, however, estimates a 9.84% decline in Philippine mango, mangosteen, and guava exports to 13,141 tons and a 24.5% dip in papaya exports to 7,545 tons.

The FAO estimates global exports of major tropical fruits to grow 2% to \$11 billion this year, with global exports of mango, mangosteen, and guava expected to grow 3% to 2.5 million tons and exports of pineapple to increase by 4% to 3.3 million tons.

Meanwhile, global exports of avocado and papaya are expected to rise 2% and 1%, respectively. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/12/30/644132/pineapple-exports-to-grow-16-in-2024-fao/>

ABANTE:

Bigas, pera mula sa mga kandidato tanggapin

Abante News

- December 30, 2024



HINIKAYAT kahapon ni Las Piñas Councilor Mark Anthony Santos ang mga botante na huwag masilaw sa salapi at mga ayuda na ibinibigay ng mga kandidato bago pa magsimula ang kampanya para sa May 2025 elections.

Ngayon palang, pinaalalahanan na ni Santos ang kanyang mga kababayan na tanggapin ang bigas at pera na ipinamumudmod ng mga mayayaman na kandidato pero iboto ang kursunada nilang susunod na mga lider ng lungsod pagdating ng halalan sa Mayo.

“Kunin ang pera kung sakali. Pero iboto ninyo ang gusto ninyo. Hiyain ang vote buyer! Walang vote buyer kung walang vote seller,” ani konsehal.

Tinukoy pa ng konsehal ang sinabi ni Lingayen Archbishop of Lingayenocrates Villegas na may nakatatanggap na ng ayuda bago pa man magsimula ang campaign period pero hindi ito maagang tulong kundi maagang corruption.

Paliwanag ni Santos, ang mga ayuda mula sa gobyerno tulad ng bigas, noodles at sardinas ay galing sa buwis ng bawat Pilipino na hindi dapat tanawin na utang na loob sa isang politiko.

Payo ni Santos sa mga botante na huwag matakot sa banta ng ilang politiko na malalaman nila 'pag hindi sila ang ibinoto sa halalan dahil computerized na aniya ang election at botante lang ang nakakaalam ng kanyang boto.

Ani Santos, may ayuda man o wala, iboto ang karapat-dapat na kandidato na may malasakit at 'plata porma de gobyerno' para sa lungsod at hindi 'yung ipinapangako na maabot ang buwan at bituin para lang iboto.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/12/30/bigas-pera-mula-sa-mga-kandidato-tanggapin/>