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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# PH hits record rice imports of 4.78-M metric tons in 2024

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

Jan 13, 2025 04:51 PM



The Philippines imported a record-breaking 4.78 million metric tons (MT) of rice in 2024, Department of Agriculture (DA) spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa revealed on Monday, Jan. 13.

“As of Dec. 31, 2024, 4.78 million metric tons ang inimport na bigas ng Pilipinas (As of Dec. 31, 2024, the Philippines imported 4.78 million metric tons of rice),” De Mesa said during a press briefing at the DA’s Central Office in Quezon City.

Based on data from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), the country’s rice imports in 2024 climbed by nearly 30 percent from the 3.61 million MT recorded in 2023.

Vietnam remained the Philippines’ primary rice supplier, accounting for 75 percent of total imports or 3.56 million metric tons. Thailand followed with 598,157 metric tons, while Pakistan supplied 283,517 metric tons. Other rice exporters included Myanmar, India, China, Japan, Cambodia, Italy, and Spain.

Meanwhile, De Mesa reported a “sharp decline” in international rice prices.

“This means that our maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice will further go down,” he said.

On Friday, Jan. 10, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. announced that the DA would impose an MSRP of ₱58 per kilo for imported rice starting Jan. 20.

However, some farmers’ groups, such as the Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG), argued that the MSRP should be lower and pegged at ₱45 per kilo.

Over the weekend, former DA Secretary Leonardo Montemayor criticized the DA's focus on retailers, urging the government to instead address the importers and wholesalers cornering the bulk of the rice market.

By focusing on rice retailers, Montemayor said the DA is allowing importers and wholesalers to reap "windfall profits.

He also pointed out that Executive Order (EO) No. 62, signed by President Marcos on June 20, reduced rice tariff rates from 35 percent to 15 percent to encourage imports and lower consumer prices by ₱5 to ₱7 per kilo.

However, Montemayor noted that the policy failed to meet its objectives, with importers benefiting from billions in tariff savings while consumers continue to face high rice prices.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/13/ph-imports-4-78-million-mt-in-2024>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **Marcos urges DA: Ensure swift support to farmers**

**BY [JOSEPH PEDRAJAS](#)**

Jan 13, 2025 02:32 PM

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President Marcos on Monday, Jan. 13, ordered the Department of Agriculture (DA) to ensure swift delivery of assistance to farmers across the country to prevent any gaps this planting season.

At the meeting with the government's economic managers, Marcos told the agency "there should be no significant delays" in the implementation of support to the agricultural farmers.

He also ordered the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) "to be mindful of the planting season" and ensure that the agriculture sector is getting all the timely support and prioritization in terms of budget.

"Huwag tayo maiiwanan sa (We should not be late in) planting season. That's why you need to come up with the timely budgetary support," Marcos told the DBM.

The Agriculture department made a presentation before the President on Monday to assure him that there is sufficient assistance in fertilizers, quality seeds and technologies, farmers, which can achieve higher yields and maximize productivity across various ecosystems.

The DA said adequate support prevents delays in seed and fertilizer distribution, allowing farmers to plant on time and optimize harvest potential.

"Increased rice production supports job creation across the value chain, farm laborers, transporters, millers, and traders, stimulating rural economies," DA said.

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"Increased rice production supports job creation across the value chain, farm laborers, transporters, millers, and traders, stimulating rural economies," DA said.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/13/marcos-urges-da-ensure-swift-support-to-farmers>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Shear line, monsoon damage to agriculture reaches P67.68 million

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

January 14, 2025 | 12:00am



A farmer prepares the field for rice planting in Sitio Sinarol, Siniloan, Laguna on January 4, 2024.

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — The amount of damage caused by the shear line, northeast monsoon or amihan and the intertropical convergence zone or ITCZ to the agriculture sector has reached P67.68 million, the Department of Agriculture (DA) reported yesterday.

According to the DA Operations Center, the amount comprises the damage to rice, corn, high-value crops, livestock and poultry in the Mimaropa, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Davao and Soccsksargen regions.

“The shear line has been affecting the country since Nov. 27, 2024, bringing moderate to heavy, with at times intense, rainfall across Luzon, Western and Eastern Visayas. Along with the shear line, other weather systems such as the ITCZ and northeast monsoon are also affecting the country,” the DA said.

Citing reports from various regional field offices, the DA Operations Center said the damage covered 3,692 hectares of agricultural areas, with a volume of production loss of 472 metric tons and affecting at least 1,887 farmers.

The bulk of the damage, or about 86 percent, was from rice production with a total of P58.44 million. The reported damage covers 3,487 hectares with an estimated production loss of 367 MT.

Other damage was recorded in livestock and poultry (P4.12 million), high-value crops (P2.87 million) and corn (P2.23 million).

The DA pegged the production loss in high-value crops at 78 MT, affecting 65 hectares. It also said the production loss for corn was at 27 MT, covering 140 hectares.

Damage and losses to the agriculture sector are expected to go higher as the DA continues with its assessment in areas affected by the weather systems.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2025/01/14/2414031/shear-line-monsoon-damage-agriculture-reaches-p6768-million>



**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Rice import volume hits 4.8 million MT in 2024

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

January 14, 2025 | 12:00am



Rice retailers manage their stalls at Marikina Public Market on January 7, 2025.

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — The government revised upward the country's total rice import volume last year to nearly 4.8 million metric tons (MT) after the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) validated the rice shipment figures.

Latest BPI data showed that total rice imports in 2024 reached a record-high of 4.78 million MT, about two percent higher than its initial figure of 4.684 million MT.

The BPI revised its rice import figures for November and December after it validated its initial record. With the revision, the BPI tallied 454,802 MT of rice import arrival in December, about 95,398 MT higher than its earlier record for the month.

The BPI also revised upward its rice import record for November to 457,515.508 MT from the previous 456,975.508 MT.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa attributed the revision to additional rice import shipments recorded by the BPI, especially during the last few days of December.

Based on the BPI figures, only 51 percent of the 9.372 million MT expected rice import volume arrived in the country.

Eligible rice importers and traders secured 9,795 sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs) last year of which 66.13 percent or about 6,477 were used.

Under present rules, an issued or approved SPSICs must be used within 60 days from the date of its issuance or approval.

Government officials earlier attributed the increase in rice imports to the need to boost domestic supply amid the extreme weather conditions faced by farms in the first half of last year.

The lowering of rice tariffs to 15 percent from 35 percent, as ordered by President Marcos through Executive Order 62, also contributed to the increase in import volume as it encouraged private entities to purchase more abroad.

The economic measure was meant to temper and prevent further spikes in retail rice prices that have been identified as one of the culprits behind faster inflation in the country last year.

The country's annual average inflation last year slowed down to 3.2 percent from six percent in 2023 due to lower increases in food and non-alcoholic beverages, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Rice inflation alone has been on a downward trend since it peaked at 24.4 percent in March last year.

The country's rice inflation in December 2024 settled at 0.8 percent, the slowest rate in three years, based on PSA data.

However, the average annual rice inflation last year was estimated at 15.8 percent, faster than the 8.1 percent recorded in 2023.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/01/14/2413939/rice-import-volume-hits-48-million-mt-2024>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Lower retail prices of imported rice seen



BY LISBET K. ESMAEL

JANUARY 14, 2025



The government may cut the maximum suggested retail price (SRP) for imported rice if the “sharp decline” in global prices would continue, an agriculture official said on Monday.

Department of Agriculture (DA) Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said that the global market had seen a drop in rice prices in the first 10 trading days of 2025.

Vietnamese rice, in particular, recorded a significant cut from December figures. Data as of Jan. 10 showed that the price of 5-percent broken Vietnamese rice—referring to grains that have fractured during the handling or milling process—had decreased by 15 percent to \$434 per metric ton against the \$510 per metric ton a month ago.

The price of 25-percent broken rice is even lower at \$409 per ton, while the 100-percent broken rice is valued at \$326 per ton.

The DA official said the drop in Vietnamese rice could be attributed to the country’s impending harvest season, which could boost supply. Vietnam is considered a crucial agricultural partner as it serves as the Philippines’ major exporter of rice.

Other major rice exporters like India and Thailand also logged price cuts earlier this month “though not as steep as those from Vietnam,” de Mesa said.

“Our maximum suggested retail price for imported rice for 5 percent and 25 percent [broken rice], most likely, will further go down,” de Mesa said.

Late last week, the government announced its move to impose maximum SRP (MSRP) for imported rice at P58 per kilo to curb the rising prices in the market.

The DA said the implementation would initially cover Metro Manila beginning Jan. 20.

The agency said the MSRP would be up for review every month to consider fresh factors affecting grain prices.

The government also prepared other measures to provide cheaper options to the public, including selling rice through “Kadiwa ng Pangulo” centers and kiosks, which may range from P36 to P45 per kilo.

Filipinos in the vulnerable sector, such as indigents, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, single parents and indigenous people, can buy even more affordable rice supply at P29 a kilo.

The National Food Authority was also ordered to sell its already-stored rice inventory for at least two months to local government units in the capital region at P38 per kilo.

<https://plus.inquirer.net/business/lower-retail-prices-of-imported-rice-seen/>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Palawan Group, DA ink partnership on agri loans

By: [Alden M. Monzon](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:01 AM January 14, 2025

The Palawan Group of Companies (PGC) has partnered with the Department of Agriculture (DA) to streamline loan disbursement and repayment services for farmers and fisherfolk.

“This partnership underscores our mission of financial inclusion, ensuring Filipinos, especially those in rural communities, can access essential financial services conveniently and seamlessly,” said Lisa Lou Castro-Sabado, PGC’s cash management solutions director.

Under the agreement, loan borrowers of the DA’s Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) can claim their loans and make payments through PGC channels.

The PGC said on Monday that through this collaboration, farmers and fisherfolk can access loans easier and repay them more conveniently.

For their part, ACPC director for program development and capacity building Noel Clarence Ducusin said: “Through our partnership with Palawan Group, we are streamlining loan disbursement and repayment, enabling farmers and fisherfolks to focus on their livelihoods with greater ease and convenience.”

To date, the PGC has over 70,000 branches, Pera Padala outlets, and PalawanPay Money Shops nationwide.

## Underserved

Citing government statistics, PGC said that farmers and fisherfolk represent the backbone of the Philippine economy, but are among the most financially underserved groups.

The company said that farmers account for the highest percentage of unbanked Filipinos, leaving many farmers and fisherfolk reliant on informal lenders or loan sharks.

PGC said it aims to address this critical gap in collaboration with ACPC, by providing structured, accessible and affordable financial services tailored to the unique needs of farmers and fisherfolk.

Highlighting a recent financial inclusion survey conducted by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), PGC said that pawnshops and money agents were among the most accessible touchpoints for rural communities.

PGC said that with its extensive network of pawnshops and remittance centers nationwide, the partnership leverages existing infrastructure to bring financial services closer to the unbanked and underserved sectors. **INQ**

<https://business.inquirer.net/501149/palawan-group-da-ink-partnership-on-agri-loans>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Marcos wants no delays in agri support for farmers this planting season

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 02:06 PM January 13, 2025



A farmer in San Marcelino, Zambales, shows his freshly harvested singkamas (turnip) in this photo taken in February 2024. —File photo by Joanna Rose Aglibot | Inquirer Central Luzon

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday directed the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to supply farmers with essential resources for the planting season.

He said this during a meeting with the administration’s economic managers in Malacañang.

“There should be no significant delays to the implementation of agri-support to farmers,” Marcos told the DA, as quoted in a statement from the Presidential Communications Office.

The president also called on the DBM “to be mindful of the planting season” and promptly deliver budgetary support for the agriculture sector.

“Huwag tayo maiiwanan sa planting season. (Let’s not be left behind in the planting season.) That’s why you need to come up with the timely budgetary support,” Marcos said.

During the meeting, the DA emphasized that “increased rice production supports job creation across the value chain, farm laborers, transporters, millers, and traders, stimulating rural economies.”

In an interview last January 5, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said 2024 was a challenging year for farmers due to adverse weather conditions and the continued prevalence of animal diseases.

“As I said before, this is the year that everything that could possibly happen has happened. From El Niño to La Niña, to the series of typhoons and volcanic eruptions, plus the ASF (African swine fever), and now there’s a brewing bird flu,” Tiu told reporters.

He noted that the farm sector’s loss due to El Niño-induced drought and successive storms amounted to P10 billion, and ASF continued to impact the swine sector since 2019, resulting in lower income and hog output.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2024200/marcos-wants-no-delays-in-agri-support-for-farmers-this-planting-season>



## **BUSINESS WORLD:**

# **LANDBANK expects to boost credit support for sugar farmers**

January 13, 2025 | 9:08 pm



### **PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO**

SUGAR FARMERS are expected to have expanded access to credit under the revised implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the Sugarcane Industry Development Act's (SIDA) Social Credit Program, Land Bank of the Philippines (LANDBANK) said.

In a statement, LANDBANK said it recently signed the revised IRR of the Social Credit Program, alongside the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA), which will expedite credit applications by sugarcane farmers.

“The streamlining of the program’s processes aims to provide more accessible and affordable credit support, in line with the Bank’s commitment to empowering sugarcane farmers and boosting the agriculture sector,” it added.

SIDA, also known as Republic Act 10659, seeks to raise the competitiveness of the sugarcane industry and improve incomes of farmers and workers.

Currently 50% of SIDA funds go to the construction of farm-to-market roads. The remaining funds are allocated to research and mechanization, socialized credit, and block farm development, with 10% dedicated to scholarships.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis S. Azcona did not immediately reply to a Viber message seeking comment.

As of the end of November, LANDBANK had approved P1.32 billion for the Social Credit Program, benefitting over 4,000 farmers, including six block farms and four common service centers. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/01/13/646437/landbank-expects-to-boost-credit-support-for-sugar-farmers/>

## **BUSINESS WORLD:**

# **Rice price ceiling could be adjusted to reflect declining international prices**

January 13, 2025 | 9:12 pm



WEAKER international rice prices could cause the proposed price ceiling on imported rice to be set lower, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Monday.

“The maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice... most likely, in the coming days will further go down,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa said in a briefing.

The DA had set the MSRP at P58 per kilogram for imported rice with broken-grain content of 5%. A price ceiling has not yet set for imported 25% broken rice. The price ceiling is expected to take effect on Jan. 20, initially in Metro Manila.

He estimated an MSRP for 25% broken rice of below P50 per kilo.

Last week, the DA announced plans to set an MSRP for imported rice to further lower rice prices and curb profiteering from rice traders.

It also set labeling rules for imported rice identifying country of origin, type, and broken-grain content. The DA had noted that prices of some imported rice brands remained elevated despite lower import tariffs.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. last year issued Executive Order No. 62 which slashed tariffs on rice imports to 15% from 35% previously until 2028.

The lower tariff rates on rice, which took effect on July 5, were intended to bring down prices and curb inflation.

The Philippines imported a record 4.78 million metric tons (MT) of rice in 2024, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

Mr. De Mesa said that there was an upward revision of the 2024 data due to “delayed counting.” Last week, the BPI reported rice imports of 4.68 million MT.

The BPI had issued 9,795 sanitary and phytosanitary import certificates (SPSIC) last year, equivalent to about 9.37 million MT of rice. Utilization by rice importers was about 66.13% or 6,477 SPSICs used.

He added that not all issued SPSICs will be fully utilized by rice traders due to factors like delayed shipping and transactions.

“There are applications which were not acted upon by the BPI, after seven days they will be deemed approved,” Mr. De Mesa said.

He added that international rice prices have declined, setting the tone for domestic rice prices.

Citing data from Vietnam as of Jan. 10, he added that the price of 5% broken rice dropped to \$434 per MT from \$510 per as of Dec. 10, while 25% broken rice fetched \$409 per MT, down from \$454.

According to DA price monitors, as of Jan. 10, a kilogram of imported special rice in Metro Manila markets sold for between P53 and P65 per kilo, while imported premium rice fetched between P52 and P60 per kilo.

The Philippines remains the world’s top importer of rice, according to the USDA. The Philippines is projected to import 5.3 million MT of rice in 2025. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/01/13/646440/rice-price-ceiling-could-be-adjusted-to-reflect-declining-international-prices/>

**REMATE:**

# **PBBM sa DA: Mabilis na suporta sa magsasaka, tiyakin ngayong planting season**

January 13, 2025 18:25



MANILA, Philippines – IPINAG-UTOS ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. sa Department of Agriculture (DA) na tiyakin ang mabilis na paghahatid ng lahat ng uri ng suporta para sa mga magsasaka upang maiwasan ang anumang pagkaantala ngayong “planting season.”

“There should be no significant delays to the implementation of agri-support to farmers,” ang sinabi ni Pangulong Marcos sa mga opisyal ng DA sa isang pulong kasama ang mga economic manager sa Palasyo ng Malakanyang. Inatasan din ng Pangulo ang Department of Budget and Management (DBM) na iprayoridad agriculture sector, siguraduhin ang napapanahong budgetary support.

“Be mindful of the planting season. Huwag tayo maiiwanan sa planting season. That’s why you need to come up with the timely budgetary support,” ang winika ng Pangulo.

Samantala, binigyang diin ng DA na sa pamamagitan ng tamang tulong sa ‘fertilizers, quality seeds, at teknolohiya’, maaaring palakasin ng mga magsasaka at gawing mahusay ang pagiging produktibo nito.

Binigyang diin naman ng departameto na ang napapanahong pamamahagi ng binhi/ punla at fertilizers ay mahalaga para maiwasan ang mga pagkaantala at mapalawak o mapalaki ang potensyal na ani. *Kris Jose*

<https://remate.ph/pbbm-sa-da-mabilis-na-suporta-sa-magsasaka-tiyakin-ngayong-planting-season/>

**REMATE:**

# Ex-DA chief: Importers, wholesalers tutukan sa rice price issue

January 13, 2025 10:54



MANILA, Philippines- Dapat ilipat ng pamahalaan ang atensyon nito mula sa rice retailers sa importers at wholesalers, ayon kay dating Department of Agriculture (DA) secretary Leonardo Montemayor nitong Linggo.

Binatikos ni Montemayor ang pagpapatupad ng mga polisiya na tila tina-target ang retailers habang pinapayagan ang major players sa importation at wholesale sector na anihin ang inilirawan niya bilang “windfall profits.”

“Why is government apparently focusing on the retailers’ end of the marketing chain instead of the importers-wholesalers component?” tanong ni Montemayor.

Binanggit niya na ibinaba ng Executive Order (EO) No. 62, ipinalabas ni Pangulong Marcos noong June 20, ang rice tariff rates mula 35 percent sa 15 percent sa pagsisikap tungo sa mas maraming imports at mas mababang presyo para sa consumers ng ₱5 hanggang ₱7 kada kilo.

Subalit, sinabi ni Montemayor na iniulat ng Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) at ng National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) na hindi naabot ng EO ang mga layunin nito.

“Government has allowed the less than 20 big players reportedly cornering the bulk of imports to pocket around ₱13.5 billion in tariff savings, which are tantamount to ‘windfall profits,’” giit niya.

Simula January 20, nakatakdang ipatupad ng DA ang maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) na ₱58 per kilo para sa imported rice upang protektahan ang consumers. Subalit, kinuwestiyon ni Montemayor kung bakit hindi ipinatutupad ang parehong panukala sa importers at wholesalers.

“By the same token, shouldn’t there be a maximum suggested imported rice profit (MSIRP) for importers and wholesalers?” aniya.

“Profiteering by a relatively few importers and wholesalers should be easier to deter and prosecute, compared to running after tens of thousands of small retailers – whose daily sales and margins are dependent on their suppliers’ deliveries and corresponding charges,” giit ni Montemayor. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/ex-da-chief-importers-wholesalers-tutukan-sa-rice-price-issue/>

**REMATE:**

# **DA: Monthly review ng P58/kilo MSRP ng premium imported rice kasado**

January 13, 2025 08:31



MANILA, Philippines- Inihayag ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na magsasagawa ito ng buwanang reviews ng maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) na P58 per kilo para sa premium imported rice, na may posibilidad na ibaba sa susunod na buwan dahil sa global trends ang nagdidikta sa anumang adjustments.

Sinabi ng DA nitong Linggo na magsasagawa ito ng monthly review ng MSRP ng premium imported rice na walang higit sa 5% na broken grains, na nagtatakda sa profit margins ng importers, traders, at retailers sa P10 per kilo.

Rekisitos sa retailers na lalampas sa MSRP na ipaliwanag ang kanilang presyo sa mga awtoridad, sa naunang pahayag ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na ang imported rice na 25% na durog ay hindi dapat lumampas sa P50 per kilo.

Batay sa pinakabagong datos mula sa DA monitoring, ang presyo ng imported commercial rice sa Metro Manila markets ay mula P45 hanggang P54 per kilo base sqa variety.

“Should rice prices remain excessively high, the DA and Department of Trade and Industry will recommend to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. the imposition of a price ceiling, with strict penalties for violators,” anang DA.

“We are committed to bringing down prices to benefit all Filipinos,” giit ni Tiu Laurel.

Kasunod ito ng pagpapababa ni Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr., sa ilalim ng Executive Order 62, sa tariff rates para sa bigas sa 15% hanggang 2028 mula sa nakaraang 35%. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/da-monthly-review-ng-p58-kilo-msrp-ng-premium-imported-rice-kasado/>



**ABANTE:**

## **2 dating BFAR exec, nagpiyansa sa 4 graft case kaugnay ng P2B VMS project**

Abante News

- **January 13, 2025**



Naghain ng piyansa ang dalawang dating mataas na opisyal ng Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) para sa apat na kaso ng graft na isinampa laban sa kanila ng Office of the Ombudsman kaugnay ng umano’y iregularidad sa P2-bilyong vessel monitoring system (VMS) project noong 2018.

Tig-P360,000 piyansa ang inihain nina dating DA Undersecretary for Fisheries at BFAR National Director Eduardo B. Gongona at dating BFAR National Director Demosthenes R. Escoto sa Antipolo City Regional Trial Court (RTC) kapalit ng pansamantala nilang kalayaan.

Itinakda ng korte ang kanilang arraignment sa Enero 22 at ang pre-trial sa Pebrero 26.

Kasama sina Gongona at Escoto sa kinasuhan ng dalawang paglabag sa Section 3(e) ng Republic Act (RA) No. 3019 o “Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act”, at tig-isang paglabag sa Sections 3(g) at 3(j) ng parehong batas dahil sa umano’y maling paggawad ng kontrata sa isang British company.

Pinangalanan ding akusado sa kaso si Simon Tucker, CEO ng UK-based SRT Marine Systems Solutions Ltd (SRT-UK).

Nagpiyansa sina Gongona at Escoto noong Enero 6, isang araw matapos maglabas ng arrest warrants ang Antipolo RTC laban sa kanila.

Ang mga kaso ay orihinal na isinampa sa Quezon City RTC noong Disyembre 3 ngunit inilipat sa Antipolo RTC dahil sa jurisdiction issue.

Nagmula ang mga kasong graft sa reklamong inihain ni Atty. James Mier Victoriano laban kina Gongona, Escoto, Tucker, dating DA Assistant Secretary Hansel Didulo, at Chief Financial Officer ng SRT-UK na si Richard Hurd.

Ayon sa reklamo, nilabag nila ang RA 3019 at ang Government Procurement Reform Act (RA 9184). Gayunpaman, ibinasura ng Ombudsman ang mga kaso laban kina Didulo at Hurd dahil sa kakulangan ng ebidensya at walang nakitang paglabag sa RA 9184 ang sinuman sa mga akusado.

Batay sa records, ang VMS project na orihinal na nagkakahalaga ng P1.6 bilyon ay popondohan sana ng pautang mula sa French government. Kinakailangang French ang sinumang bidder o bahagi siya ng isang joint venture kasama ang isang French entity.

Noong 2017, nanalo ang SRT-France, subsidiary ng SRT-UK, sa bidding ngunit na-disqualify ito ng pamahalaan ng France dahil sa British ang nagmamay-ari rito at sa kawalan ng operational facilities sa France. Dahil dito, natigil ang loan agreement.

Noong 2018, inilipat sa lokal na pondo ang proyekto at itinaas ang budget nito sa P2.09 bilyon. Sa parehong taon, iginawad ang kontrata sa SRT-UK. Pinalawak din ang saklaw ng proyekto mula sa orihinal na 3,736 VMS transceivers ay naging 5,000 na ito, at isinama ang satellite service subscriptions, na nagdulot ng karagdagang gastos sa gobyerno.

Sa resolusyong inilabas noong Pebrero 5, 2024, sinabi ng Ombudsman na sina Gongona, Escoto, at Tucker ay nagkutsabahan upang igawad ang kontrata sa SRT-UK sa paraang nakapinsala sa gobyerno.

“Pinangunahan nila ang sunod-sunod na mga kahina-hinalang hakbang na humantong sa paggawad ng paborableng kontrata sa SRT-UK,” ayon sa Ombudsman.

Dagdag pa nito, napilitan ang gobyerno na bilhin ang 5,000 VMS transceivers sa halip na 3,736 lamang, na nagresulta sa isang luring-luring kontrata.

Ang proyekto, na sinimulan noong Disyembre 4, 2018, ay nakatakdang magtapos noong Disyembre 4, 2021, ngunit ngayon ay itinuturing nang expired.

Pinanindigan ng Ombudsman ang desisyon nito noong Pebrero 2024 sa pamamagitan ng pagtanggap sa mga mosyon na inihain ng mga akusado sa kautusang nilagdaan ni Ombudsman Samuel Martires noong Oktubre 2024.

Tinanggal na sa serbisyo si Escoto ng Ombudsman matapos mapatunayang guilty sa grave misconduct kaugnay ng parehong transaksyon.

Bukod dito, naharap din si Escoto sa kasong contempt of court dahil sa pagpapatupad ng Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) No. 266 sa kabila ng permanent injunction mula sa Malabon RTC.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/01/13/2-dating-bfar-exec-nagpiyansa-sa-4-graft-case-kaugnay-ng-p2b-vms-project/>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# **Bills to protect small fishers' welfare weighed**

**By Reina C. Tolentino**  
January 14, 2025

KEY officials of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) met Monday with Bicol Saro Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan to discuss possible bills that would ensure that the welfare of small fisherfolk is protected.

Yamsuan called for the meeting as the chairman of the House Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources, after fishers' groups, local government units (LGUs), and civil society groups asked the Supreme Court to reconsider a ruling which, according to a statement from his office, "could clear the way for commercial fishing companies to have unobstructed access to municipal waters."

The Fisheries Code imposes a 15-kilometer municipal water zone for the use of small fishers.

"Our primary concerns here are the livelihood and welfare of our 2.5 million small-scale fisherfolk, and our food security. We need to make sure that the impact of every decision made would not imperil efforts to boost our food security and endanger the sustainability of our marine resources," Yamsuan said.

BFAR officials led by OIC-Director Isidro Velayo Jr. told Yamsuan the Supreme Court decision was not yet final, and that they have been coordinating with the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) to seek its reversal.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/14/news/national/bills-to-protect-small-fishers-welfare-weighed/2037935>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Marcos tells DA: Expedite support to farmers

By Kristina Maralit  
January 14, 2025

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday directed the Department of Agriculture (DA) to ensure the swift delivery of all forms of support to farmers to fill up any gaps during this planting season.

"There should be no significant delays to the implementation of agricultural support to farmers," Marcos said during his meeting with the DA and his administration's economic managers in Malacañang.

He also reminded the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) "to be mindful of the planting season" and see to it that the agriculture sector is well-supported and prioritized for the farmers to have steady yields.

"Be mindful of the planting season. Make sure no one gets left behind during the planting season. That's why you need to come up with timely budgetary support," the chief executive said.

During the meeting, DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. emphasized that with sufficient assistance in fertilizers, quality seeds, and technologies, farmers can achieve higher yields and maximize productivity across various ecosystems.

Likewise, Laurel said that adequate support prevents delays in seed and fertilizer distribution, allowing farmers to plant on time and optimize harvest potential.

"Increased rice production supports job creation across the value chain, farm laborers, transporters, millers, and traders, stimulating rural economies," the agriculture chief said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/14/news/national/marcos-tells-da-expedite-support-to-farmers/2037933>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# Amid uncertainty, disruptions, what sectors are vital?

Andrea E. San Juan

January 14, 2025



**A vegetable vendor attends to a customer buying at a local food market in Cainta, Rizal. Some of the vegetables that saw price spikes like tomatoes are now back to normal prices, but several others remain pricey. Food inflation is a key concern of the government, and the Department of Agriculture and Department of Trade and Industry have set key interventions to keep prices of basic food items stable.**

A LOCAL think tank has identified critical minerals, advanced manufacturing and semiconductors, agriculture and food security as some of the 10 industries in the country that should be supported and developed amid the geopolitical uncertainty and global supply chain disruptions.

“By recognizing and supporting these 10 industries, the Philippines can adapt its economic policies to global trends while mitigating vulnerabilities,” a study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) noted.

Based on insights from key experts, the local think tank listed 10 industries in the Philippines which are considered “pivotal” to the Philippines’s future development.

Topping the list is Advanced Manufacturing and Semiconductors which, the study said, is experiencing “increased global demand due to advancements in artificial intelligence, 5G, and renewable energy systems.”

According to the study, neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Vietnam have “successfully attracted” semiconductor investments and noted that the Philippines could achieve similar progress through workforce development and incentives for foreign direct investment.

Under the renewable energy sector, experts underscored the Philippines’ “unique opportunity” to capitalize on its natural resources, such as solar and geothermal energy, and integrate advanced technologies for energy storage.

“Key informants pointed out the importance of aligning with global decarbonization efforts and adopting lessons from regional leaders to accelerate the transition to renewable energy while mitigating risks from energy insecurity,” the study also noted.

Meanwhile, with the vulnerabilities caused by climate change and geopolitical disruptions, the local think tank underscored the importance of a “secure and resilient” agricultural sector.

“Informants highlighted the importance of agritech adoption, improved irrigation systems, and resilient crop varieties,” the PIDS study noted.

The think tanks quoted experts as saying that strengthening food self-sufficiency programs would reduce dependency on imports and protect the country against external shocks, especially during global supply chain disruptions.

The study also noted the country’s abundant reserves of critical minerals, such as nickel and cobalt, which are “vital” for electric vehicle production and renewable energy technologies.

“Key informants identified the need for sustainable mining practices and domestic processing capabilities to maximize the economic value of these resources. They emphasized that the global

push for decarbonization presents an opportunity for the Philippines to play a pivotal role in global value chains,” the study added.

In sustaining the long-term competitiveness of these critical industries, the study pointed out the need to prioritize STEM education, technical training and advanced degree programs to prepare the workforce for emerging economic demands.

“They also suggested establishing international exchanges and scholarship programs focused on critical industries to foster innovation and ensure knowledge transfer,” the study said.

On health, the study underscored the importance of a “robust” healthcare and biotechnology sectors.

Experts stressed that the Covid-19 Pandemic emphasized the need for local pharmaceutical manufacturing, vaccine research and development, and medical device production hubs to reduce reliance on imports and enhance the Philippines’s capacity to respond to future health crises.

Other industries that need to be developed and supported amid the increasingly complex global landscape are the digital economy and cybersecurity; logistics and supply chain management; tourism and creative industries and defense and aerospace.

According to the study, the Philippines’s expansion of critical industries are tied to the global economy and its reliance on the global supply chain means being exposed to a “variety of risks” associated with countries it has economic ties with.

Image credits: [Bernard Testa](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/14/amid-uncertainty-disruptions-what-sectors-are-vital/>



## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **December rice arrivals push 2024 volume to historic levels**

Ada Pelonia  
January 13, 2025

THE volume of imported rice that entered the country in December brought the 2024 arrivals to an unprecedented level.

Latest figures from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) showed that rice shipments reached 454,802 metric tons (MT) in December, which catapulted imports to 4.78 million metric tons (MMT) last year. This was nearly 33 percent higher than the 3.6 MMT imported in 2023. The agency revised upward the earlier 4.68 MMT rice imports recorded in 2024 due to “delayed counting.”

BPI data also indicated that only 51 percent of the 9,795 sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs) for the purchase of 9.37 MMT of imported rice arrived in the country.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said several factors would account for the nonuse of the import clearances issued by the government.

For one, he explained that sometimes there are delays in transactions or the SPSICs would expire. Under existing rules, the SPSICs have a 60-day validity period from the day of issuance.

“There are applications that are automatically approved if the BPI does not act on them and this is because of the [Rice Tariffication Law],” De Mesa told reporters in Filipino during a briefing on Monday.

A provision under the RTL states that “failure on the part of the BPI to release the SPSIC without informing the rice importer of any error, deficiency, omission, or additional documentary requirement shall mean automatic approval of the SPSIC applied for within seven days after submission of the complete requirements.”

Meanwhile, Roehlano Briones, senior research fellow at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), said lower rice tariffs and damage from the dry spell and series of typhoons likely drove up rice imports.

“Lower tariffs [and] harvest losses first from drought then typhoons [could have contributed to the surge in imports],” Briones told the BusinessMirror. For her part, University of Asia and Pacific Center for Food and Agribusiness (CFA) executive director Marie Annette Galvez-Dacul said a comprehensive analysis of the food staple’s value chain would be necessary to know the underlying cause behind the country’s imports.

“There are multiple factors that likely contributed to the surge in rice imports but a thorough analysis of the rice value chain is essential to pinpoint the true underlying causes,” Dacul told this newspaper.

BPI data also showed that 39,261 MT of rice shipments arrived in the country as of January 9.

#### Lower MSRP

The DA official also said the decline in global quotations of rice would likely lower the maximum suggested retail price of the food staple. Citing data from the Vietnam Food Association, De Mesa noted that the price of Vietnam’s 5 percent broken rice dropped by 15 percent to \$434 per MT as of January 10 from \$510 per MT recorded the previous month.

For Vietnam’s 25 percent broken rice, he said prices shrank by 11 percent to \$409 per MT from \$454 per MT.

“[This means that the] maximum suggested retail price for imported rice for 5 percent and 25 percent most likely, in the coming days, will further go down,” De Mesa said in Filipino.

Starting January 20, the DA said it will impose an MSRP of P58 per kilo for premium imported rice with 5 percent broken grains. The agency has yet to set a price for the 25 percent broken rice variety.

De Mesa noted that the MSRP for 25 percent broken rice variety could settle at P45 per kilo.

“That’s a probability considering the decline [in global rice prices] was very sharp,” he said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/13/december-rice-arrivals-push-2024-volume-to-historic-levels/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **House leadership vows to probe soaring rice and electricity prices, defend public welfare**

Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz  
January 13, 2025

The leadership of the House of Representatives on Monday reaffirmed its commitment to investigating the soaring prices of rice and electricity, vowing to stand firm in defending the public's welfare.

Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez made the commitment in remarks at the resumption of the session of the 19th Congress after its holiday recess.

“Let this be our promise: public trust is sacred, and this House will never betray it,” Romualdez said.

“Good governance demands transparency and accountability. This chamber is the vanguard of that principle. In the coming weeks, we will hold oversight hearings to ensure that the people's money serves the people's needs,” he told his colleagues.

While ensuring energy reforms that lower electricity costs, the speaker also said, “we will investigate the smuggling and hoarding that undermines our farmers and inflates food prices,” Romualdez said.

Romualdez highlighted the House's resolve to examine other pressing issues, including P11.18 billion worth of expired medicines and underutilized PhilHealth funds, as well as alleged misuse of confidential funds.

“And we will scrutinize the alleged misuse of confidential funds, for no peso must go unaccounted for,” he added.

The speaker noted that committees on ways and means and agriculture have started addressing the high costs of rice, agricultural products, and electricity.

“To those who criticize and attempt to halt our investigations, here’s our message: We will fulfill the duty entrusted to us by the people. We will not back down from any fight for the people,” Romualdez asserted.

Romualdez also lauded the Philippines’ economic resilience amidst challenges. Early projections for 2024 indicate a growth rate of 5.9 percent to 6.5 percent, attributed to the hardworking Filipino farmer, worker, and entrepreneur, and the administration’s Build, Better, More infrastructure program.

The initiative injected over P1.2 trillion into infrastructure projects aimed at connecting communities to opportunities.

“This performance is a testament to the industriousness of every Filipino farmer, worker, and entrepreneur who continues to drive our economy forward,” the speaker said.

However, Romualdez pointed out that economic growth should benefit the ordinary Filipino.

“Yet, let us be clear: numbers alone cannot define progress. Progress is meaningful only if it uplifts the lives of our people. What is development for if the ordinary Filipino does not benefit?” Romualdez asked.

He said while the nation achieved economic progress, inflation remained a big challenge.

“Thanks to decisive action, inflation eased to 4.9 percent, but the burden remains heavy for many families. Programs like Ayuda sa Kapos ang Kita Program (AKAP) and Kadiwa ng Pangulo were launched not just as economic interventions but as expressions of our empathy. Governance, after all, must be both strategic and compassionate,” he said.

He also cited the accomplishments of the House in terms of approved legislative measures.

“In 2024, this chamber achieved an extraordinary milestone: 183 measures became laws. But true success lies not in the quantity of laws passed but in their quality—how they change lives,” he said.

“These are not just policies—they are commitments to a better, fairer, and stronger nation,” Romualdez said.

He told his colleagues that their chamber, which he called People's Chamber, "stands as a testament to the enduring strength of democracy."

"Within these walls, we do not simply draft laws; we give life to the aspirations of a nation, and we shape the destiny of generations yet unborn," he said.

He said the resumption of the session of Congress "is a moment to reflect on our shared purpose: to serve as stewards of our nation's welfare, architects of its future, and guardians of its dignity."

Also, Romualdez announced that next month, the Philippines will host the Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum (PI-SF) with 96 countries to address global security challenges. In 2026, the country will chair ASEAN and host the 47th AIPA General Assembly.

"The \$100 billion in investments secured through state visits reflects international confidence in our nation's future. These investments will transform industries, generate employment, and push the Philippines toward a new era of prosperity," the House leader said.

He, meanwhile, urged lawmakers to rise above partisanship, legislate with empathy, and lead with vision to uplift every Filipino.

"Let us legislate with empathy, govern with integrity, and lead with vision. Let us build a nation where every Filipino, no matter their station, feels the hand of the government working for their benefit... Together, we will ensure that no Filipino is left behind," he said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/13/house-leadership-vows-to-probe-soaring-rice-and-electricity-prices-defend-public-welfare/>

**ABANTE TONITE:**

# Presyo ng bigas sa mga probinsya sumirit – PSA

January 13, 2025

Sa kabila ng pagtapyas ng taripa sa bigas, tumaas pa ang wholesale price nito sa iba't ibang rehiyon at lalawigan sa bansa.

Ang wholesale price ang sinisingil ng mga trader sa retailers bago ito umabot sa mga konsyumer.

Ayon sa datos ng Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), nagmahal pa ng 7.2% ang wholesale price ng regular milled rice sa Ilocos Region nitong Disyembre 2024 sa P43.41 per kilo mula P42.79 per kilo noong Disyembre 2023.

Tumaas din ng 8.7% ang wholesale price ng well milled rice sa Ilocos sa P46.78 per kilo mula P43.04 per kilo noong Disyembre 2023. Walang datos ang PSA tungkol sa wholesale price ng special at premium rice sa Ilocos region.

Nagmahal din ang wholesale price ng regular milled rice sa Cavite ng 19.2% sa P44.36 mula P37.20 at sa Misamis Oriental ng 22.1% sa P46.21 per kilo mula P37.84 per kilo.

Sa mga pangunahing producer ng bigas na Nueva Ecija at Oriental Mindoro, tumaas din ang wholesale price ng well milled rice. Nagmahal ang wholesale price ng well milled rice sa Nueva Ecija ng 7.6% sa P50.83 per kilo mula P47.25 per kilo at sa Oriental Mindoro ng 18.3% sa P46.45 per kilo mula P40.60.

Samantala, tumaas ang wholesale price ng premium rice sa Mimaropa, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, at Northern Mindanao. Walang datos ang PSA tungkol sa wholesale price ng premium rice sa Davao at Ilocos pati na ng wholesale price ng special rice sa Ilocos. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/01/13/presyo-ng-bigas-sa-mga-probinsya-sumirit-psa/>