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THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Marcos urged to delay release of budget ‘pork’ Until after 2025 midterm polls

Cecille Suerte Felipe - The Philippine Star

January 2, 2025 | 12:00am



President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. at the Malacañang on December 3, 2024.

STAR / Noel Pabalate
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MANILA, Philippines — To prevent the use of billions in public funds from being used by politicians for the 2025 elections, President Marcos can classify all Congress-introduced amendments in the 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA) as “for later release” or FLR, former Senate president Franklin Drilon said yesterday.

In a statement, Drilon made the proposal as he noted that Marcos’ vetoes of some items in the 2025 national budget were largely “cosmetic,” barely touching the “pork barrels” of legislators, principally lodged in the bloated appropriation for the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

“In my opinion, the pork barrel of the congressmen has not been fixed. There is still a big pork barrel left in the GAA,” Drilon said in a radio interview. “There is not much change. The pork barrel is still big in the DPWH.”

“The 2025 budget is considered an election-year budget. Hence, we must be vigilant. The budget should not be a tool in aid of the 2025 elections,” Drilon said.

Delaying the release of the controversial appropriations, he said, could “prevent the budget from being perceived as a tool for election-related spending.”

He said this would ensure compliance with the Omnibus Election Code, which prohibits the release, disbursement or expenditure of public funds for public works, as well as the delivery of construction materials, starting March 28 or 45 days before election day.

The FLR mechanism is a practice implemented by the Department of Budget and Management during the previous administration. Under this approach, Congress-introduced amendments that are not part of the President's National Expenditure Program are classified as FLR, requiring compliance with specific conditions before funds are released.

By subjecting Congress-introduced amendments to the FLR classification, Drilon argues, the public will be assured that government funds will not be used as leverage for election purposes.

Drilon tagged the President's vetoing of P168 billion in Unprogrammed Fund (UF) allocations as "cosmetic," since these standby appropriations lack funding unless additional revenues are generated.

"The veto of unprogrammed activities is a cosmetic, more than anything else, as the unprogrammed activities and projects are not supported by programmed revenues," Drilon had earlier said.

While P26 billion worth of DPWH projects were vetoed, leaving a total of P263.9 billion in congressional insertions, Drilon said the overall amount of insertions across the budget remains significant at P347 billion.

With only P26 billion reverted to the Treasury, that means only that amount is available to restore the funding of de-funded projects in the National Expenditure Program (NEP), said Drilon, adding that this leaves key programs like the P74.4-billion subsidy for PhilHealth and the P50 billion for the 4Ps unlikely to be restored.

ODA eyed for DA budget shortfall

Funding from Official Development Assistance (ODA) will augment the Department of Agriculture (DA)'s 2025 budget of P237.4 billion after President Marcos formally signed the P6.326-trillion national budget, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said yesterday.

"I am happy with the support of the President. In any case, we just have to work within our means. In general, we also have a lot of ODA coming in to augment whatever shortfall we might need to do our job," Tiu Laurel said.

The ODA, as defined in Republic Act 8182 or ODA Act of 1996, is a loan or a grant administered to promote sustainable social and economic development and welfare of the Philippines.

Meanwhile, the DA is among the departments with the largest allocation for this year.

"The good thing, I am looking forward to implementing all projects (this year), from cold storages, to solar irrigation, change of planting calendar, increasing planting intensity to 2.5 from 1.8, so I think we can produce more and stabilize prices," he added.

At the same time, Tiu Laurel said the DA is serious in implementing the change in planting calendar amid the impact of successive typhoons in the agriculture sector in 2024.

Tiu Laurel added that the DA, through the help of the Landbank of the Philippines and Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), will allocate a combined funding of P200 million to finance the Agri-Puhunan Program.

DILG budget, rural electrification

“It is a condition of the Agri-Puhunan that farmer will be given P60,000, P28,000 for the inputs, including land preparation, harvest and transport and P32,000, P8,000 monthly support but the conditions include you need to change planting calendar,” Tiu Laurel noted, adding that the DA targets to cover at least 100,000 farmers in the Agri-Puhunan program.

Meanwhile, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and its nine attached agencies has committed to managing its budget for 2025 with responsibility following its recent approval under Republic Act 12116, also known as the 2025 General Appropriations Act.

With a budget allocation of P279.1 billion – the fourth-largest among government agencies – DILG Secretary Jonvic Remulla expressed the commitment to fulfilling its mandate to foster local governance excellence, promote peace and order and enhance public safety.

“We assure the President, Congress and the public of our commitment to utilize our budget responsibly, judiciously and prudently in support of the administration’s agenda for prosperity by fulfilling the needs and aspirations of the Filipino people,” Remulla said.

For his part, Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian said the approved 2025 GAA has enough funding for the government’s rural electrification program, as the National Electrification Administration (NEA) was allotted P1.87 billion in the national budget this year.

Gatchalian said this funding will enable the NEA to provide electricity to 22,000 rural households. There are an estimated 4.214 million households nationwide that still have no electricity as of June 2023, Gatchalian said.

“Electricity is necessary for business to thrive in far-flung areas, which in turn will provide jobs and improve the economy,” Gatchalian said. “We hope that the budget allocation for the NEA for 2025 would help push the rural electrification program to its completion in the next couple of years,” he added.

Electrification in the country stood at 89 percent in 2023 and 91 percent in 2024. Based on the five-year electrification plan, the government aims to increase coverage to 94 percent in 2025, 97 percent in 2026 and achieve 100 percent in 2027.

As of August 2024, NEA energized 1,153 sitios using government subsidy provided the previous year. – **Bella Cariaso, Christine Boton, Marc Jayson Cayabyab**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/02/2411307/marcos-urged-delay-release-budget-pork-until-after-2025-midterm-polls>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Money, money



[VIRTUAL REALITY](#) - [Tony Lopez](#) - The Philippine Star

January 2, 2025 | 12:00am

The government did two things with our money in 2024. Both will impact on our political and economic consciousness in 2025 and perhaps, beyond.

One, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the reincarnation of a once bankrupt Central Bank, has removed former presidents and heroes from our paper currencies.

Two, our politicians, particularly our senators and congressmen, mangled the 2025 national government budget beyond belief and relief. The money monstrosity, P6.326 trillion, opens exciting (for our politicians) and salvatory (for our politicians) possibilities for premeditated plunder of the unprecedented kind, a horrible act of cruelty on our people.

My columnist colleagues in this paper have adequately pointed out the inanities in the 2025 budget and its huge possibilities for abuse.

On Dec. 30, 2024, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed the budget bill into law. He sounded reassuringly enough. He said:

“On this day that we honor our national hero, we enact the 2025 General Appropriations Act. And through this measure the dreams of our heroes are realized by a nation birthed by their sacrifices.

“This budget reflects our collective commitment to transforming economic gains into meaningful outcomes for every Filipino. It is designed not just to address our present needs, but to sustain growth and to uplift the lives of generations that are yet to come.

“In the first two years of this administration, we focused on creating the foundation for an inclusive, sustainable and resilient Philippines. From targeted reforms to strategic investments, we ensured that our progress is felt in the daily lives of every Filipino.

“Today, we build on that momentum, guided by the same precision, purpose and unwavering determination.”

Today, being New Year, let us have faith in the President. After all, notes Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin, BBM had been a local government official (governor of Ilocos Norte), a congressman and a senator. He thinks like an economist – and a banker.

Let me then focus on the new currency bills. They are no longer made of paper. They are plastic. Synthetic polymers come from polyethylene, a petrochemical derived from crude oil. Crude oil, the source of plastic, harms the environment. Plastic cannot be destroyed. Paper can.

The Philippines used to have among the best currency and best designed notes in the world. They were made of paper, which is biodegradable, and abaca, the most durable natural fiber (better than plastic in ropes).

The BSP replaced our presidents and heroes with animals and plants.

If these living things were edible (probably they are), our heroes ay parang ginawang gulay at ulam. This is not a metaphor. In 2024, half of our money expenditures went to food.

Food was short in 2023. More so in 2024.

The BSP defined the problem as inflation, not a food shortage. So instead of ordering the stoic banking system to allocate more funds for agriculture, the BSP doubled interest rates in one year and tripled them in three years, increasing cost of capital that in turn slowed production and cut job generation. Not surprisingly, the GDP or economic growth rate declined from 7.6 percent in 2022 to 5.5 percent in 2023 and to 5.9 percent in 2024.

The state-owned Landbank alone has more than P2 trillion of idle deposits, money if deployed to food production, would solve our food shortage overnight. The Department of Agriculture correctly called it a food shortage but blamed the rice cartel and fickle weather.

An eagle has replaced World War II martyrs Abad Santos et al from the 1,000-peso bill. A deer has replaced the Aquinos and Bonifacio from our 500-peso bill. A peacock and an orchid have replaced president Manuel Roxas from the 100-peso bill. A cat (leopard) and an unknown flower have replaced president Sergio Osmeña from the 50-peso bill.

To me, and to the world, the eagle is the symbol of America. The peacock is a symbol of arrogance or a person na malaking bilib sa sarili (one who has excessive self-esteem). Remember the phrase, “strut like a peacock?” A leopard is a predator. And orchids? Well, they are the most expensive and most difficult to maintain flowers. They are flowers of the rich. And the BSP wants us to adopt these flora and fauna as our “national identity?” “E di wow,” as the late president Noynoy Aquino would sneer.

The BSP had explained away the plastic banknotes as being “more responsive to the needs of the elderly and the visually impaired, and feature the latest anti-counterfeiting technology.” The elderly need money and health care. The 2025 GAA removed a P74.31-billion subsidy for PhilHealth. As for the visually impaired, they cannot see the color of your money and don’t get it anyway.

Meanwhile, the world’s biggest economy, which accounts for 65 percent of the world’s capital, still uses paper money. Quora says paper currency made from cotton and linen has

distinct advantages, such as familiarity, ease of handling and a well-established production process.

Quora cites some reasons why the US has not adopted polymer like Canada, Australia and the Philippines:

- Cost. Transitioning to polymer currency involves significant costs, including new printing equipment, redesigning bills and public education campaigns. The US has a vast existing stock of paper currency. Changing it requires a massive and expensive overhaul.
- Acceptance. Americans are accustomed to paper notes. Acceptance of new currency materials often takes time and education.
- Durability and security. While polymer notes are more durable and resistant to wear and tear, the US has invested heavily in advanced security features for its paper notes. The US dollar bill is secure against counterfeiting.
- Cultural factors. Currency often carries cultural significance. The US has a long history and tradition associated with its paper notes. This may influence the reluctance to change.

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<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2025/01/02/2411208/money-money>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

SC ruling on fishing in municipal waters hit

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

January 2, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture has been asked to appeal a decision of the Supreme Court (SC) allowing commercial fishing within 15 kilometers of municipal waters.

Ronnel Arambulo, vice chairman of fishers' group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas, said Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. should assert the rights of small fisherfolk and oppose the ruling opening municipal waters to commercial fishing.

Fisherfolk and groups led by Oceana Philippines on Monday criticized concerned government agencies for allegedly failing to assert the rights of small fishers in municipal waters.

Earlier, the high tribunal upheld the ruling of the Malabon Regional Trial Court allowing commercial fishing vessels in municipal waters.

Arambulo said 90 percent of municipal waters would be controlled by commercial fishing vessels if the SC decision is implemented.

He said the ruling would affect over two million registered municipal fisherfolk and a majority of subsistence fishers nationwide.

The Mercidar Fishing Corp. had filed a petition asking the court to declare unconstitutional the preferential access of small fisherfolk to municipal waters.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2025/01/02/2411252/sc-ruling-fishing-municipal-waters-hit>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Rice, corn mills close shop in over 1,000 barangays

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

January 2, 2025 | 12:00am



The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that in 2023, there were 15,436 barangays with rice and corn mills, 6.3 percent lower than the 16,476 barangays recorded in 2013.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Small-scale rice and corn millers in over 1,000 barangays closed shop in a span of a decade after they were dominated by bigger players amid the influx of cheaper imported grain supplies.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that in 2023, there were 15,436 barangays with rice and corn mills, 6.3 percent lower than the 16,476 barangays recorded in 2013.

The figures were part of the PSA's Census of Agricultural and Fisheries Availability of Agricultural, Aquaculture and Fisheries Machinery, Equipment and Services in Barangays, which was conducted in 2022, 10 years after the previous census.

The easing of import rules through the deregulation of the rice industry allowed the entry of more affordable foreign grain supplies, resulting in a stiffer competition in the domestic milling industry, according to the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. (PCAFI).

This competition, PCAFI president Danilo Fausto said, led to big players in the rice milling industry to command buying prices and siphon off more locally produced supplies, to the detriment of smaller mills.

This has been evident in the dwindling share of locally produced rice in the country's annual stocks, Fausto said.

The country's rice import dependency ratio (IDR) rose to 23 percent in 2022 from just 8.1 percent in 2012, based on PSA data. This means that 23 percent of the country's total rice supply in 2022 was imported.

"The lowering of tariffs incentivizes people to import. Since rice millers will not import a lot because it will kill their companies, they will try to buy more from the local market," Fausto told The STAR.

"And when they do siphon the market supplies, it is the small millers that die," he added.

Fausto warned that more small-scale rice and corn mills may shut down in the coming years after the government further cut tariffs on rice and corn. Last year, President Marcos slashed rice tariffs to a historic low of 15 percent while tariffs on corn imports were retained at five percent for in-quota and 15 percent for out-quota until 2028.

At the end of 2022, PSA data showed that 12,376 barangays nationwide had available rice mills while 4,578 barangays had an existing corn mill.

Thresher was the most available farm machinery nationwide as it was present in at least 19,583 barangays, the PSA reported.

Meanwhile, pasteurizer used in milk or juice processing was the scarcest machinery or equipment nationwide. It was found only in 511 barangays or 1.2 percent of the 42,020 barangays covered by the census, PSA said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/01/02/2411192/rice-corn-mills-close-shop-over-1000-barangays>

BUSINESS WORLD:

How to store holiday leftovers and cut food waste

January 2, 2025 | 12:04 am

By **Zahra Hirji**

CELEBRATING the holidays usually involves an abundance of food: cheese platters galore, big Christmas dinners with a centerpiece of turkey or ham or Hanukkah parties overflowing with latkes, and of course piles of cookies, cakes, and other desserts.

“It’s part of our culture,” says Dana Gunders, president of the US-based nonprofit ReFED, which works to reduce food waste. “But I do think there are steps you can take to make sure it’s not wasteful.”

Between 30% and 40% of the US [food supply is wasted](#), according to the Department of Agriculture (USDA). That’s driving climate change, with the Environmental Protection Agency estimating nearly 60% of methane emitted from municipal solid waste landfills [comes from decomposing food](#).

And yet most people underestimate how much food they waste. Multiple surveys in recent years have found that roughly three-fourths of Americans say they waste less than the average person.

“Obviously, that’s not possible,” Roni Neff, a food waste researcher at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. (The school is supported by Michael Bloomberg, founder and majority owner of Bloomberg LP, parent company of Bloomberg News.)

The good news is there are simple ways to reduce waste. Many of them are focused on being smarter about food safety. Implementing them can help the climate and save money.

With fridges swelling with leftovers, Bloomberg Green reached out to food safety and waste experts to get answers to common questions about how to best handle food and avoid unnecessarily trashing it.

Does the smell test work to determine if food is good to eat or not?

Sniffing food can be useful to check if quality has declined, says Savana Nunn, a food safety expert at North Carolina State University. Other senses can also provide clues: Beyond smelling bad, if food looks moldy or slimy, or tastes bad, experts do not recommend eating it.

But our noses can’t detect the presence of foodborne pathogens such as salmonella that can contaminate food. “Really any foodborne pathogen can infect you where the lowest infectious dose won’t create a scent detectable to a human,” says Ms. Nunn.

Is it ever okay to scrape the mold off something and then eat it? Or, say, if there’s mold on one clementine in a bag or one piece of bread in a loaf, can you toss it and eat the rest?

Some mold makes us sick, some don't. But the average person can't easily distinguish between the different types, Ms. Nunn explains.

It's also important to recognize that mold visible on the surface likely doesn't represent its full extent. "When a food shows heavy mold growth, 'root' threads have invaded it deeply," [warns a USDA mold factsheet](#). Among the items the [agency recommends tossing](#) if mold is visible are bread, cooked pasta, lunch meat, soft cheese, soft fruits and vegetables such as cucumbers and peaches, peanut butter and jams, and yogurts. But there are some exceptions. Hard cheeses and firm fruits and vegetables, such as cabbage and red peppers, are still OK if you cut off at least an inch around and under the moldy spot, per USDA.

How long can you leave something cooked on the counter without it going bad? Does it need to go into the fridge or freezer after cooking?

From roasted meat to simmered vegetable soups to cooked rice, Ms. Nunn recommends getting that prepared food off the stove or the dining table within four hours. But if the temperature is 90°F (32.2°C) or above, it should only be left out of the fridge or freezer for an hour at most, she says.

Refrigerated leftovers can be OK for up to seven days, Ms. Nunn says, noting her recommendation differs from the more conservative four days recommended by the USDA.

Leaving out food too long can cause pathogens to grow and create harmful endotoxins, explains Ms. Nunn. The endotoxins can also be heat stable, meaning re-heating the food won't kill them. One example of this is the bacterium *Bacillus cereus*, which can multiply quickly on pasta and rice at room temperature and produce toxins. While it won't likely kill you if you're healthy, the elderly and immunocompromised, "are at a greater risk for suffering complications," says Ellen Shumaker, director of outreach for North Carolina State University's food safety program, "and deaths have occurred."

Is it better to put warm food in the fridge right away or wait until it reaches room temperature?

There's no need to wait nowadays. Older appliances weren't as efficient and "putting hot foods in could cause strain on the ability for the fridge to keep everything cold," Ms. Shumaker says. Today, "refrigerators can handle the warm food going right in," says Ms. Nunn.

She recommends packing hot things destined for the fridge in shallow containers to help speed up the cooling process and avoiding stacking multiple hot containers on top of one another.

How much worse is it to waste resource-intensive foods? For example, is it worse to waste a pound of steak compared to a pound of broccoli?

It's "absolutely" worse, according to Ms. Neff. The carbon emissions [associated with producing meat](#), particularly red meat "is far higher than other foods," she says. Thankfully research also suggests people tend to waste less meat, perhaps because it's more expensive compared to fruits and vegetables.

Moreover, some modeling suggests that food items with higher water content, such as fruits and vegetables, "are expected to have lower methane generation potential," explains Minerva Ringland, ReFED's climate and insights manager.

How long does frozen food stay safe to eat?

Assuming your freezer doesn't warm up due to a power outage or other issue, it should keep food safe indefinitely, although the quality may decline over time, says Ms. Gunders. She uses her freezer

constantly, from stashing bread to packing leftovers before going on a trip. That includes surprise items like milk.

Chefs are developing a growing number of recipes specifically to encourage cooking things without needing to defrost them first, particularly seafood. “The idea is if you buy seafood frozen and you never defrost it, then you’re much less likely to have these issues with worrying if it’s going to go bad and the supermarket’s also going to not have to worry about it going bad,” says Neff. “You can prevent a lot of waste that way.”

Do things high in fat, salt, acid, or other natural preservatives like soy sauce and peanut butter need to be refrigerated? And if not, does refrigerating extend their shelf life?

Refrigerating such products “can definitely extend shelf life,” Ms. Nunn says, by slowing down the growth of spoilage organisms over time. She says the best course of action is to look at a food label and see what the manufacturer recommends.

Do refrigerator crisper drawers actually keep fruit and vegetables fresher for longer?

In a word, yes. You can control the airflow into crisper draws. It’s best to keep vents open for low-humidity foods, such as apples, pears, melon and most other types of fruit (except berries), Ms. Nunn explains. On the flip side, she recommends closing vents to store high-humidity foods prone to wilting or thin-skinned. Think lettuce, other leafy greens, herbs and cucumbers.

Ms. Nunn also has a tip for extending the freshness of produce left on your countertop. Some fruit, including bananas, produces a hormone called ethylene that induces ripening for anything in its vicinity. So if you don’t want your avocados to ripen too quickly, don’t put them near ripe bananas, Ms. Nunn says.
— **Bloomberg**

THE Center for Culinary Arts Manila (CCA Manila) is helping us out with recipes that utilize holiday party leftovers, for a more efficient (and tasty) New Year.



BEEF CALDERETA TACOS**WITH****PICKLED****VEGETABLES**

Yield: six servings

INGREDIENTS:

White vinegar, 120 ml

Water, 60 ml

Sugar, white 10 g

Salt, 5 g

Carrots, julienned 60 g

Eggplant, sliced 50 g

Red onion, sliced 30 g

Tortilla wrap, toasted 6 pcs

Iceberg lettuce, shredded as needed

Leftover beef *caldereta*, 300 g

Cheddar cheese, 60 g

PROCEDURE:

1. Combine white vinegar, water, sugar and salt in a pot. Let it boil for 3 minutes.
2. Add carrots, eggplant, and onion. Turn off heat.
3. Marinate vegetables for 5-10 minutes. Remove vegetables and set aside.
4. On a tortilla wrap, place shredded lettuce at the bottom.
5. Add beef *caldereta*, reserved pickled vegetables and cheese on top.



LECHON

SOPAS

Yield: four to six servings

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups shredded leftover rotisserie chicken or pork lechon

½ small cabbage, chopped

2 cups small elbow macaroni

1 cup Fiesta Ham, chopped

1 medium carrot diced

3 stalks celery chopped

1 medium yellow onion chopped

2 tablespoons butter

6 cups chicken stock

1 can (340 ml) evaporated milk

Salt and pepper to taste

As accompaniment:

6 pieces *pandesal*, toasted with grated leftover *queso de bola*

PROCEDURE:

1. Heat the cooking pot and add butter. Let it melt.
2. Sauté ham, carrot, celery, and onion for 3 minutes or until soft.
3. Put the shredded rotisserie chicken or pork lechon into the pot. Stir and cook for three minutes.
4. Pour chicken broth. Let it boil. Cover the pot and continue to cook in medium heat for at least ten minutes to develop flavors.
5. Add cabbage, and put the elbow macaroni into the pot. Cover and cook until al dente.
6. Pour evaporated milk. Stir. Continue to cook for two minutes.
7. Season with ground black pepper and salt. Serve hot with toasted *pandesal* and *queso de bola*.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/bloomberg/2025/01/02/644244/how-to-store-holiday-leftovers-and-cut-food-waste/>

MANILA STANDARD:

Tiangco highlights food plan success

By Maricel Cruz

January 1, 2025, 11:10 pm

Rep. Toby Tiangco of Navotas City, member of the Murang Pagkain Super Committee, highlighted the National Food Authority's (NFA) success in achieving 95 percent of its inventory goal this year, accumulating over 5 million 50-kilogram bags of milled rice sourced exclusively from local farmers.

“We continue to feel the results of President Bongbong Marcos’ agricultural programs. With the help of the laws and reforms promoted by the President, we can ensure that the agricultural sector is doing well and above all, the development of the lives of our farmers.”

“This is timely because the government continues to prepare for the imminent eruption of Mt. Kanlaon),” he added.

Tiangco noted that based on the amended Rice Tariffication Law, NFA is mandated to maintain a 15-day buffer stock to sustain disaster relief programs and address food security challenges.

This stock is equivalent to 300,000 metric tons of milled rice, the agency’s target inventory for 2024 and 2025.

In addition, Tiangco expressed confidence that the Bureau of Customs (BOC) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) will heed President Marcos’ directive for the strict enforcement of Republic Act 12022, also known as the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act.

https://manilastandard.net/news/314542436/tiangco-highlights-food-plan-success.html?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR0kqI2dr41pApK4varaHsCP2ZzEq5Wyz91-dRvtB8oVFKcfsyNu-W8Ei4c_aem_chheZpsNcPqHZ2hzqK7w-w

Copra animal feed project expands to WVisayas

[By Giselle P. Jordan](#)

January 2, 2025

AGRICULTURE Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has ordered the expansion of the Protein-Enriched Copra Meal (PECM) Commercialization Project to the Western Visayas region.

Developed by the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) Biotech Center, PECM — a more affordable, sustainable, alternative protein source in animal feeds — is made through a fermentation process that increases by 45 percent the protein content in copra, which is a by-product of coconut.

Compared to conventional commercial feeds, PECM has yielded a 3.9-percent and 0.4-percent reduction, respectively, in feed costs from trials conducted on finfish and shrimp.



Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. PHOTO FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The project was launched in 2022 after the price of imported soybean meal in animal feeds jacked up due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war. Farmers in Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) and Soccsksargen (South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and General Santos) were the first ones to benefit from the project.

While Covid-19 dissipated in 2023, the Russia-Ukraine conflict is still a challenge for the global supply and prices of animal feed ingredients. Russia and Ukraine account for a combined 30 percent of the global feed grain supply.

Hog production down

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed hog production in Western Visayas declined by 23 percent to 158,471 metric tons in 2023.

Tiu Laurel hopes the PECM project expansion to Western Visayas will help farmers and feed producers in the region. "The program not only helps reduce feed costs but also supports the local economy by creating new markets for coconut by-products, which are often underutilized," he said.

The PECM project is a collaboration between the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development, and the University of the Philippines Los Baños, including farmers' cooperatives and associations.

https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/02/business/top-business/copra-animal-feed-project-expands-to-wvisayas/2029130?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAAR0eVMgkHjy6Y_i_NgLKOXnMasNHPjHPrxJXFQkQAvave8A7IaAytNgyYCK_aem_o4t7vv6mu3HraKrM3p0wZA

THE MANILA TIMES:

Cabanatuan to host farm machine firms

[By Conrad M. Cariño](#)

January 2, 2025

CABANATUAN, Nueva Ecija, has been selected as the site for the country's first industrial park for companies that will manufacture agricultural equipment and spare parts.

The initiative is a collaboration between the Cabanatuan City government, Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech), and the Korea Agricultural Machinery Industry Cooperative (Kamico).



During the 2024 Machinery Roadshow last December, the Department of Agriculture, through the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization, featured the latest agricultural machines for rice, corn, and high-value commodities to farmers and other stakeholders of Central Luzon's agriculture industry. The event was held in collaboration with the Korea Agricultural Machinery Industry Cooperative and the city government of Cabanatuan. PHILMECH PHOTO

PHilMech, an agency under the Department of Agriculture (DA), has been working hard for the realization of the project and will

provide technical expertise, among many others. On the other hand, Kamico has been providing training and other forms of assistance to PHilMech with the ultimate aim of improving the country's manufacturing and fabrication of agricultural equipment.

The 20-hectare site that will be called the Korea Agricultural Machinery Industry Complex (Kamic) is expected to boost local machinery production, benefiting both current and future generations of farmers.

DA Special Concerns and Official Development Assistance-Foreign Aid/Grants Undersecretary Jerome Oliveros expressed his enthusiasm on the project, highlighting its alignment with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s vision for the country's agriculture sector.

"It's delightful because, finally, the dream of our beloved President will soon come true. In the next couple of years, many machines like the ones we saw earlier will be produced and, one day, will be distributed across the entire archipelago of our country," he said.

For her part, Cabanatuan Mayor Myca Elizabeth Vergara expressed the local government's full support for the project, particularly in improving public roads to ensure accessibility to the site.

"We feel immense pride in being part of the collaboration that reflects our shared commitment to harmonize innovation and tradition while supporting the livelihood of our farmers," she stated.

Vergara also reiterated that the establishment of Kamic in the city would improve access to agricultural machines such as tractors, harvesters and other equipment that could help increase crop yields and enhance farmers' livelihoods within and outside of Nueva Ecija.

"With the help of these machineries, the farming process will surely become easier and faster. Not only will this make our work more efficient, but it will also strengthen our production, leading to higher income for you, our farmers," she said.

The project will also help generate jobs. The groundbreaking for the project is expected to take place in March 2025.

https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/02/business/agribusiness/cabanatuan-to-host-farm-machine-firms/2029075?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR0Y1n69ZVw8Mlbpp0YfEx0s67w8wa8SSgTgCuVT_CBpOncKnPgO0RIcDg_aem_0yENFcNKWvm5zD8pLbKTGQ

THE MANILA TIMES:

China helps boost Zimbabwe farms

[By Xinhua News Agency](#)

January 2, 2025

HARARE — The year 2024 has witnessed significant milestones in China-Zimbabwe cooperation in the agriculture sector, a cornerstone of Zimbabwe's economy.

Trade between the two sides increased, while China's support for Zimbabwe's technical expertise and human resources development in the agriculture sector also expanded.



Grasiano Nyaguse, Minister of the Embassy of Zimbabwe in China, visits the soilless cultivation greenhouse of Guizhou Aerospace Intelligent Agriculture Co. Ltd. in Guiyang, southwest China's Guizhou province, on June 4, 2024. XINHUA PHOTO

According to the Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency, a national investment promotion body, the agriculture sector sustains more than 60 percent of Zimbabwe's population, provides 63 percent of raw materials for the manufacturing sector, generates 30 percent of export earnings and contributes 15 percent to gross domestic product.

In a bid to further open China's market to Zimbabwean agricultural products, a trade protocol on the export of Zimbabwean avocados was inked during Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa's state visit to China in September, ahead of the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.

Rodwell Choto, an avocado farmer from Bindura, Mashonaland Central province, is among those preparing to meet the expected surge in demand from China.

"Exports to China will give us foreign currency, our economy will grow and our livelihoods will improve," Choto told Xinhua in a recent interview, noting that avocado farmers are ramping up production.

According to the Horticultural Development Council, an organization representing horticultural exporters in Zimbabwe, the Southeast African country is projected to produce a record 6,000 metric tons of avocados in 2024, with its avocado industry set to expand the growing area from the current 1,500 hectares to 4,000 hectares by 2030.

This builds on earlier successes, including a 2022 trade agreement enabling the export of fresh citrus to China, which saw its first shipment in 2023.

"This is a chance for African agriculture now to become part of the global food value chain," said Christopher Mutsvangwa, politburo member and secretary for information and publicity at the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front party.

https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/02/business/agribusiness/china-helps-boost-zimbabwe-farms/2029071?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAAR0kqI2dr41pApK4varaHsCP2ZzEq5Wyz91-dRvtB8oVFKcfsyNu-W8Ei4c_aem_chheZpsNcPqHZ2hzqK7w-w

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Experts: Costly rice still an inflation risk

Cai U. Ordinario

January 2, 2025

JUST when expectations began to emerge that inflation is already on a downtrend, a US-based think tank warned that expensive rice may again become a culprit for the faster increase in commodity prices.

In an economic brief, Global Source Partners Country Analyst Diwa Guinigundo said this could make 2025 “problematic” and, as such, means monetary policy will be insufficient to address rising commodity prices.

Guinigundo noted that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) adjusted its inflation forecasts for the year to 3.4 percent this year and 3.7 percent in 2026 on the back of expectations that higher domestic food prices could not be ignored.

“With the BSP’s risk-adjusted inflation forecasts, we have an idea that the BSP itself realizes that risks could not be dismissed,” Guinigundo said.

“With these risks, the Government ought to do something that works rather than the usual stuff.”

Guinigundo said they deemed concerning the earlier disclosure by the Department of Agriculture (DA) that it was “contemplating on declaring a ‘food emergency’” in 2025 to help contain rice prices.

This was amid the alleged presence of rice cartels and hoarders, which, Guinigundo said, remains a challenge for the government to address along with the President’s campaign promise to reduce rice prices to P20 per kilo.

“This announcement raises some serious questions about the ability of Government to ensure the sufficiency of rice supply in the market from production to harvest to marketing to retail,” Guinigundo said.

“It would be useful for the DA to report on the use of the proceeds of rice import tariffs in encouraging greater agricultural output and moderating rice prices,” he added.

Guinigundo also noted that it was difficult to understand how the return of the National Food Authority (NFA) to the rice market or allowing state corporations like the Food Terminal Inc. (FTI) to import rice would lead to lower rice prices.

He said this could only “drown” rice stocks purchased by the NFA in the market, while allowing corporations such as FTI to import rice would only lead to the same effect if NFA will be the one to import the country’s staple.

However, Guinigundo said, the only difference at this time is the lower tariff rates—these were reduced to 15 percent from 35 percent. Even with the reduction, the impact was also cited as minimal.

“Even in the past, [the NFA] failed to temper rice prices and inflation. Buffer stocks at NFA would just be drowned in the market. How the NFA could exercise flexible pricing of its stocks without losing money should be clarified,” he said.

In the Murang Pagkain Supercommittee hearing at the House of Representatives in December, Neda Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Environment Staff (ANRES) Director Nieva T. Natural said lower rice tariffs reduced farmgate prices by 16.8 percent between June and October 2024.

The Neda report, shared by Natural, also showed the lower rice tariffs had a more limited impact on retail prices as there was only a reduction of 1.7 percent in the prices of the commodity.

Based on the PSA, farmgate price by region per commodity is computed as the arithmetic mean of the average prices of the provinces. This is the price set by farmers for their produce—in this case, rice.

Landed cost, meanwhile, is the cost of imported goods when they arrive in the Philippines, while retail prices are the prices of goods when these are finally sold to the general public.

Given the larger impact on farmgate prices, which could be disadvantageous to the country’s farmers, Natural said a more nuanced analysis may be required to explain what happened to the prices.

Nonetheless, the Neda said in its report that it is possible that a lack of competition in the rice market may have prevented a greater reduction in retail prices compared to farmgate prices.

https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/02/experts-costly-rice-still-an-inflation-risk/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR0DvIVXCusQH9Ly3lrbbZb3DPTY6OE1eDkxVONzM3UN82pYH9Di9KRJc5c_aem_ZlOIK_q2S-m29I67XKLOfQ