

CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY JANUARY 20, 2025

A. THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

P58/kg imported rice max SRP takes effect

DA files raps over P20.8 million smuggled vegetables

Explain warehouse congestion, NFA urged

B. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DTI intensifies price monitoring of rice, basic goods

DA readies projects under Pandemic Fund grant

BPI files smuggling raps vs vegetable importer

C. BUSINESS WORLD:

Bounty Fresh committed to supporting contract growers

China 2024 pork output falls, 1st decline in 4 years

Argentina's Milei poised to announce record trade surplus led by grain, energy exports

US turkey producers should ramp up bird flu testing — USDA

D. THE MANILA TIMES:

Food price increases minimal so far

DA agency sues trader for smuggling P20.8M veggies

Claims NFA warehouses are congested questioned

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

P58/kg imported rice max SRP takes effect

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

January 20, 2025 | 12:00am



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

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — The maximum suggested retail price (SRP) of P58 on imported rice takes effect today, a ranking official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) said as cost of the staple remains high despite the implementation of Executive Order 62, which lowered the tariff on imported grains to 15 percent from 35 percent.

In a radio interview yesterday, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said personnel of the DA and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) would inspect the different markets in Metro Manila to ensure compliance to the P58 maximum SRP.

“The maximum SRP on five percent broken (imported rice) and the changes on labeling will start on Jan. 20,” De Mesa said.

De Mesa said that based on the agreement of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. with Metro Manila mayors, the local government units (LGUs) will also help in implementing the maximum SRP.

“No sign of maximum SRP (on the price tag) per se, but our personnel from the DA and DTI will jointly monitor (the compliance in the markets). The DA has no power to implement

sanctions at the moment but the DTI, through their Fair Trade Enforcement Bureau and LGUs have the power to monitor and impose sanctions,” De Mesa added.

He added that under the Price Act, traders can impose a maximum of 10 percent profit on the items they sold.

“Under the maximum SRP, the P58 should be the highest price (for rice being sold in the markets),” he said.

According to De Mesa, certain rice varieties such as glutinous rice, black rice and red rice will not be covered by the maximum SRP.

“These are the rice varieties that are not covered by the maximum SRP but if the consumers monitor premium and special imported rice (exceed P58 per kilo) covered by MSRP, they can report to us using the hashtag #BantayPresyo,” De Mesa said.

Based on monitoring of the DA, the retail price of imported rice was still sold as high as P65 per kilo; imported premium rice, up to 60 per kilo; imported well-milled rice, 52 per kilo; imported regular milled rice, P48 per kilo.

De Mesa said that the government is confident that the retail price of rice would go down in the next few days.

On the other hand, De Mesa said that Tiu Laurel would talk to President Marcos before the formal implementation of the food security emergency which is expected to be signed on Wednesday.

“Secretary Laurel mentioned that he will talk to the President before the formal declaration but we are happy with his support,” he added.

He said that the DA is awaiting the signed resolution of the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) prior to the declaration of food security emergency.

“Let us wait for the parameters as the resolution (of the NPCC) has yet to be received by the DA which will be the basis for the conditions to be set by the government (on the implementation of food security emergency) but this should be fast,” De Mesa said.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/20/2415477/p58kg-imported-rice-max-srp-takes-effect>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA files raps over P20.8 million smuggled vegetables

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

January 20, 2025 | 12:00am



A law enforcer examines smuggled onions confiscated during a raid on a warehouse in Navotas on August 15, 2024.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA), through its Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), has filed a complaint against an importer amid its alleged involvement in the smuggling of P20.8 million worth of carrots and white onions at the Port of Subic.

Charges were filed against Betron Consumer Goods Trading and its owner Ronnel Manalang before the Olongapo City Prosecutor's Office for violation of Food Safety Act and the 1978 Plant Quarantine Law, according to the DA.

In August last year, five shipping containers declared as frozen fish egg balls were found, upon inspection, to contain 56,998 kilos of carrots and 85,626 kilos of yellow onions, valued at approximately P20.8 million.

In her affidavit, Subic Port's National Plant Quarantine Services Division area manager Carmela Rivera said the misdeclared agricultural goods were confiscated immediately to safeguard public health.

Rivera added that further analysis revealed traces of E. coli and unregistered pesticide residues in the seized produce.

The BPI said that a show-cause order was issued to Betron and Manalang, but was ignored, prompting the agency to escalate the case.

The DA said the case highlights deliberate misdeclaration and fraudulent documentation, which not only endangered public health, but also defrauded the government.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/20/2415457/da-files-raps-over-p208-million-smuggled-vegetables>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Explain warehouse congestion, NFA urged

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

January 20, 2025 | 12:00am



“According to the Department of Agriculture, one of the major objectives of a declaration of a food security emergency is to enable the National Food Authority to decongest its warehouses by selling 300,000 tons of rice buffer stock.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor yesterday urged the National Food Authority to disclose the real reason for the congestion in its warehouses after the NFA disclosed that at least 300,000 metric tons of aging rice needed to be disposed.

“According to the Department of Agriculture, one of the major objectives of a declaration of a food security emergency is to enable the National Food Authority to decongest its warehouses by selling 300,000 tons of rice buffer stock. This would, in turn, supposedly open up storage space for the palay that NFA would be procuring from farmers during the harvest period starting next month,” Montemayor said.

Montemayor was referring to the recommendation of the National Price Coordinating Council to the DA to declare a food security emergency to address the high retail price of rice and empower the NFA to sell its aging stocks to local government units.

“The NFA, through its nationwide network of warehouses, has a total storage capacity of 1,200,000 tons in palay or rice form. In what warehouses and locations is congestion happening?” he added.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa has said that Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. is expected to approve the food security emergency on Jan. 22.

“If, say, in Occidental Mindoro, why weren’t their stocks shipped out earlier to other areas within or outside Region 4-B?” Montemayor asked.

Montemayor recalled that from July to December 2024, the Philippines was hit by a series of destructive typhoons.

De Mesa has said that while there is no cause for alarm amid the impending declaration of the food security emergency on rice, there is an extraordinary increase in the retail price of the staple which will warrant it.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/20/2415461/explain-warehouse-congestion-nfa-urged>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DTI intensifies price monitoring of rice, basic goods

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:05 AM January 20, 2025



RICE WATCH Rice vendor Eddie Pascual waits for customers at his stall in Marikina Public Market. —GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has vowed to intensify price monitoring of basic commodities, including rice, canned goods and bread, keeping a close eye on both costs as well as supply chain.

“In ‘Bagong Pilipinas, empowered consumers are our priority. We ensure this by strengthening the DTI’s price and supply monitoring across the country. Our goal is to guarantee fair prices and access to essential goods for all,” Trade Secretary Ma. Cristina Roque said in a statement over the weekend.

Roque said they were working closely with the Department of Agriculture (DA) and local government units.

“This collaborative approach will allow us to better protect consumer rights and ensure the well-being of all Filipinos,” she said.

The DTI said that rigorous price checks have been conducted at nine wet markets, covering 22 rice retailers and 12 individual rice vendors as of January 9.

The government agency's fair trade enforcement bureau also said that they would continue to support and enhance price monitoring of basic goods as well as maintain the stability of supply in local markets.

Basic necessities under the DTI's mandate include canned fish and other marine products, processed milk, coffee, laundry soap, detergent, candles, salt, bottled water and locally manufactured instant noodles.

On the other hand, the DA oversees rice, corn, cooking oil, fresh and dried marine products, fresh eggs, fresh pork, beef and poultry meat, fresh milk, fresh vegetables, root crops, sugar and fresh fruits.

For its part, the Department of Energy is responsible for household liquified petroleum gas and kerosene.

Products such as flour, processed and canned pork, beef and poultry, vinegar, fish sauce, toilet soap, paper, school supplies and batteries are included in the list of prime commodities under the DTI.

As for prime commodities under the DA, the roster includes dried pork, beef and poultry meat, onion, garlic, fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides.

Aside from ramping up their price monitoring efforts, the DTI also said they were ensuring consumer welfare through their "timbangang ng bayan" program, an initiative that provides public weighing scales at wet markets for public use.

"We are committed to safeguarding consumers from profiteering and other acts of price manipulation, ensuring they are not burdened by unjust price hikes," DTI fair trade group assistant secretary Teodoro Agaton Uvero said.

<https://business.inquirer.net/502056/dti-intensifies-price-monitoring-of-rice-basic-goods>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA readies projects under Pandemic Fund grant

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:02 AM January 20, 2025

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is gearing up to implement a \$24.9-million, or about P1.46 billion, grant from the World Bank (WB) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations to combat animal and human health threats.

The DA created a project preparation team to prepare the documentary requirements to implement Resilient Philippines, one of the projects that form part of the WB's and FAO's Pandemic Fund Grant worth \$547 million.

The grant to the Philippines is intended for strengthening disease surveillance and upgrading laboratories, among others.

The Philippines was one of the 50 countries selected in the second funding round conducted by the WB and FAO to beef up pandemic prevention, preparedness and response of many recipients worldwide.

Project proposal

Based on Special Order No. 71, the DA's preparation team, led by Agriculture Undersecretary Jerome Oliveros, will prepare and coordinate with concerned DA offices regarding the project proposal for funding under the Pandemic Fund.

It will compile all technical inputs, relevant information and necessary data for crafting the proposal and submit it to the agriculture secretary for approval.

The secretariat will assist in the initial drafting and subsequent improvement of the proposal as well as facilitate meetings, consultations, site visits/missions and other related activities.

Aside from coordinating with the preparation team and other agencies for the project, it is also tasked with monitoring the timeline of activities from preparation until the finalization and approval of the proposal.

The DA said last November that the grant would help the country invest in early warning systems, laboratory infrastructure and the development of a skilled health workforce.

“This grant will not only enhance our pandemic preparedness but will also strengthen the nation’s agricultural sector, which is vulnerable during outbreaks,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary Constante Palabrica said.

The G20 launched the Pandemic Fund in 2022 as a direct response to the global vulnerabilities caused by the coronavirus pandemic. It finances vital investments to beef up the pandemic preparedness and resilience of most at-risk countries. INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/502051/da-readies-projects-under-pandemic-fund-grant>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

BPI files smuggling raps vs vegetable importer

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:39 AM January 20, 2025



MANILA, Philippines — The government has filed smuggling charges against Betron Consumer Goods Trading and its owner, Ronnel Manalang, for misdeclaring P20.8 million worth of produce that were found not to have phytosanitary permits.

The Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) filed the complaint before the Olongapo City Prosecutor's Office for violating the Food Safety Act and the Plant Quarantine Law of 1978.

The complaint stemmed from the confiscation of five shipping containers declared as frozen fish balls at the Port of Subic last August.

Upon inspection, the authorities discovered that these containers held 56,998 kilos of carrots and 85,626 kilos of yellow onions, valued at about P20.8 million.

No import clearances

In the complaint, Carmela Rivera, area manager for Subic Port's National Plant Quarantine Services Division, said they seized the misdeclared produce.

The goods lacked the mandatory sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances, which ensured that such food items comply with existing standards to protect the health of humans, plants and animals as well as prevent the spread of diseases or pests.

“Further analysis revealed traces of E. coli and unregistered pesticide residues on the seized produce,” the Department of Agriculture (DA) said in a statement over the weekend.

Blacklisted

Worse, Betron and Manalang ignored a show-cause order issued to them, prompting the BPI to file the complaint on Dec. 9, 2024, resulting in the revocation of Betron’s importation license.

Betron and Manalang were subsequently blacklisted from engaging in future operations in the agricultural sector.

Those found guilty of violating the Food Safety Act may be slapped with penalties that include a fine ranging from P50,000 to P500,000 and suspension or permanent revocation of authorization to operate a food business.

They may be also be held liable for hospitalizations and rehabilitations arising from the imported produce, and face imprisonment from six months to six years.

Last December, the DA announced that it blacklisted 10 companies, including Betron, for illegal trade acts or other unlawful agricultural practices.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2026286/bpi-files-smuggling-raps-vs-vegetable-importer>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Bounty Fresh committed to supporting contract growers

January 20, 2025 | 12:04 am



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

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

POULTRY integrator Bounty Fresh Group Holdings, Inc. said it will continue to lean on its contract growing program rather than resort to poultry imports, noting that growers need support in the face of rising feed costs and the continued threat of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) or Bird Flu.

“Our focus is on supporting local production, ensuring that the growth benefits local farmers and communities rather than relying on imported chickens,” Bounty Fresh Group Chief Executive Officer Kenneth G. Cheng told *BusinessWorld* in an email.

Bounty Fresh’s contract growing program provides poultry raisers with feed and other inputs, veterinary care, and technical support.

Mr. Cheng added that partner farmers benefit from a steady income, resources, and expert guidance, which maximizes their productivity while reducing uncertainty.

“The program promotes regulatory compliance, sustainable practices, and innovative farming techniques,” he said. “Through our program, we are also trying to make agriculture an investable market, encouraging financial institutions to lend money to farmers or aspiring farmers.”

Ma. Isabel Ledesma, a contract farmer and owner of Eastvale Farm in La Paz, Tarlac, said contract growing ensures that farms enjoy a predictable income stream.

“It cuts down on financial risks by covering key aspects of the business, like chicks, feed, and medication. This minimizes our initial investment,” she told *BusinessWorld* via email.

Ms. Ledesma added that contract growers’ partners are a source of guaranteed demand, ensuring that growers no longer need to market to other buyers.

She said Eastvale Farm has taken steps to minimize the risk of a bird flu outbreak.

“We limit access to the poultry houses and ensure that anyone entering follows strict hygiene protocols, like disinfecting hands and shoes. For vehicles entering the farm, we have tire sprayers and wheel baths,” Ms. Ledesma added.

The Philippine poultry industry is still waiting on an approved vaccine, putting biosecurity at the forefront of available measures to curb the spread of the disease.

Some 53 municipalities across nine provinces have active HPAI cases as of Jan 10, according to the Bureau of Animal Industry.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has said it is seeking to start large-scale trials of an Avian Influenza (AI) vaccine by March. The DA will allocate about P300 million to procure 30 million vaccine doses.

The Philippines has logged its first case of HPAI Type A, Subtype H5N2 in farmed ducks in Talisay, Camarines Norte.

Mr. Cheng said that Bounty Fresh said biosecurity measures can go a long way towards keeping chickens healthy, with “no artificial interventions needed.”

“We’re proud to raise our chickens with no antibiotics ever. That means no antibiotics or steroids at any point in their lifecycle,” he added.

“We also follow strict farm protocols, like requiring showers and clothing changes before anyone enters, to protect our chickens from bacteria,” he said. “These measures allow us to protect our chickens from bird flu and other diseases, ensuring healthier chickens and higher-quality products”

According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Philippine chicken production is expected to increase 3.8% to 1.63 million metric tons (MT) in 2025.

“The poultry industry is still in its growth phase, and we’re optimistic about its potential. Over the next 20 to 30 years, we see promising opportunities for expansion, and we’re excited to play a big part in that journey,” Mr. Cheng added.

He said that strong demand for poultry products is expected to drive growers to improve their productivity.

“There’s strong and consistent demand for poultry, which remains a key protein source for Filipino households. This demand drives producers to innovate and adopt more sustainable practices, aligning with global trends in responsible agriculture,” he added.

However, Mr. Cheng said that the bird flu continues to be a constant threat to the industry.

“The recent H5N2 bird flu outbreak in Camarines Norte highlights the constant threat of disease outbreaks, which disrupt production and require stringent biosecurity measures,” he added.

He said that the influx of imported poultry meat also threatens the competitiveness of the industry.

“(This led) to farmgate prices dropping as low as P80 per kilogram, while retail prices remain high. This disparity puts immense financial strain on farmers,” Mr. Cheng added.

The USDA said Philippine chicken imports this year are expected to rise as the pricing of imported chicken remains attractive compared to domestically produced chicken.

He said that rising production costs and the need for additional investment in biosecurity and climate adaptation measures are drags on the growth of the poultry industry.

“By investing in sustainable farming practices, strengthening biosecurity, and advocating for fairer market dynamics, we aim to overcome these challenges and contribute to the growth and resilience of the Philippine poultry industry,” Mr. Cheng said.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/01/20/647522/bounty-fresh-committed-to-supporting-contract-growers/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

China 2024 pork output falls, 1st decline in 4 years

January 20, 2025 | 12:03 am



REUTERS

BEIJING — China's pork production in 2024 fell for the first time after rising for three years straight, official data showed on Friday, as livestock companies reduced slaughter rates due to ample hog supply and weak meat demand.

The world's biggest pork producer generated 57.06 million metric tons of pork in 2024, down 1.5% from the 2023 level, which was the second-highest on record.

Farmers slaughtered 702.56 million hogs in 2024, down 3.3%.

China accounts for about half of the world's pork consumption. The winter season during the fourth quarter is typically a high season for pork and cured meat consumption.

In the fourth quarter, production fell by 1.8% year on year to 14.66 million metric tons (MTs), a decrease from a year earlier for the fourth consecutive quarter, according to Reuters calculations of the data from the National Bureau of Statistics.

Despite tepid demand, some companies ramped up production in the fourth quarter after inventory and cost cuts helped them return to profitability.

Many of China's large hog companies are now expecting to raise slaughter rates in 2025 after slowing down production in 2024.

Wen's Foodstuff Group said it aims to slaughter 34 million hogs this year, a year-on-year increase of 12.65% compared with 2024, while New Hope plans to slaughter 1 million to 2 million more hogs.

China's pig herd stood at 427.43 million at the end of December, a decrease of 1.6%.

The sow herd was down 1.9% at 40.80 million at the end of November, according to separate data from China's agriculture ministry.

Despite a smaller herd size, analysts expect China's hog supply in 2025 to remain in excess of demand and pressure prices due to improved productivity of sows.

Cash hog prices have fallen to below 16 yuan per kg since December and have remained around that level, down from a peak of 21 yuan in August, according to data from consultancy MySteel.

In a report Friday, it said prices may come under pressure in the months ahead following the Lunar New Year later this month.

"After the Lunar New Year, as the market enters the traditional off-season and slaughterhouse orders decrease, hog prices may face a downturn, with lower procurement costs for slaughterhouses and more negative factors leading to a decline in wholesale pork prices," the report said.

China's beef output rose last year by 3.5% to 7.79 million tons. Poultry output increased 3.8% to 26.6 million tons and lamb and mutton decreased 2.5% to 5.18 million tons. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/01/20/647523/china-2024-pork-output-falls-1st-decline-in-4-years/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Argentina's Milei poised to announce record trade surplus led by grain, energy exports

January 20, 2025 | 12:01 am



JAVIER MILEI — REUTERS

BUENOS AIRES — Argentina likely logged the largest trade surplus in its history in 2024, a Reuters analyst poll released on Friday showed, on the back of libertarian President Javier Milei's bid to boost grains and energy exports in his first full year in office.

Milei, who has been president since December 2023, vowed to make Argentina a net energy exporter using the vast shale reserves in the Patagonian Vaca Muerta region. Grains exports, aided by some easing of currency controls and better weather, also rose.

Argentina is the world's top exporter of processed soy oil and meal, the third largest for corn and an important wheat and beef producer. It has major lithium reserves needed for electric batteries, as well as shale gas and oil.

Analysts polled by Reuters forecast the year-end trade surplus between \$18 billion and \$19 billion, blowing past the previous record of \$16.89 billion set in 2009.

The December monthly data, set to be published by the national statistics agency on Monday, was estimated to be a \$921 million surplus, according to the median of the Reuters poll.

From January to November, Argentina logged a \$17.20 billion trade surplus, official data show, turning around the \$7.94 billion trade deficit in the first 11 months of 2023.

Milei's drive to turn Argentina's economy around through an austerity push has also brought inflation down to close the year at 117.8%, after an April peak of nearly 300%.

Analysts say Argentina's trade surplus is likely to narrow.

"From here on out, we'll likely see a scenario in which imports grow considerably," said Federico Gonzalez, an economist at Empiria Consultores.

Imports have already begun to tick up as the Argentine peso has strengthened against other regional currencies, such as the Brazilian real, and as the Milei administration has lifted some taxes on certain goods.

The government this week announced plans to lift

anti-dumping restrictions on imports to bring down prices on goods such as household appliances.

"In 2025 we may see the trade balance come in at just 40% of the 2024 surplus," said Milagros Suardi, economist at consulting firm Eco Go. "That would come with a recovery in imports, as well as an economic recovery and improved exchange rate." — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/01/20/647581/argentinas-milei-poised-to-announce-record-trade-surplus-led-by-grain-energy-exports/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

US turkey producers should ramp up bird flu testing — USDA

January 20, 2025 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

CHICAGO — US poultry producers should ramp up testing and monitoring of turkeys for bird flu before they are slaughtered to ensure the virus stays out of the food supply, the US Department of Agriculture said on Friday.

The agency is advising enhanced safety measures in Minnesota and South Dakota, where turkey flocks with more than 500 birds should be isolated, monitored and tested for bird flu within 72 hours before going to slaughter, USDA said.

Other states may be included later, the agency added.

“The new policy is encouraged, and has support from states and industry, but not required,” USDA spokesperson Lyndsay Cole said in an email.

The changes come after a pet food company, Northwest Naturals, last month recalled cat food made with turkey because it tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza, or bird flu.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture said a cat contracted the disease and died after eating Northwest Naturals’ Feline Turkey Recipe raw and frozen pet food contaminated with the virus.

Nearly 70 people in the US, most of them farmworkers, have contracted bird flu since April, as the virus has circulated among poultry flocks and dairy herds. Three people have tested

positive without a clear source of exposure to the virus, according to the CDC. There is no confirmation that any people became infected by eating food that contained the virus.

Increased testing and surveillance of turkey flocks aim to remove a potential avenue for spreading the disease and to bolster confidence among consumers and trading partners, the agency said.

Minnesota, the nation's biggest turkey producer, and South Dakota have suffered bird flu outbreaks in flocks.

"These states were selected because of genetic linkages to the virus from infected cats and because of the high percentage of cases in turkeys in those states," USDA said. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/01/20/647582/us-turkey-producers-should-ramp-up-bird-flu-testing-usda/>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Food price increases minimal so far

By Janine Alexis Miguel

January 20, 2025

PRICE increases in food products were minimal, with the cost of 72 percent of basic and prime commodities (BNPCs) remaining unchanged as of mid-January, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said in a statement.

"This positive trend underscores the effectiveness of the government's initiatives to stabilize prices and protect consumers from significant hikes," Trade Secretary Ma. Cristina Roque said.

Among the 28 percent of goods with less than 10 percent price increases were canned sardines and luncheon meat both at 5.0 percent; meatloaf, 4.0 percent; and vinegar, 2.8 percent.

Their new suggested retail prices will take effect on Feb. 1.

Roque attributed the price hikes to rising production costs, but noted the increases were minimal to protect consumers and manufacturers alike.

"The DTI will continue to closely monitor and enforce market prices throughout the country to ensure compliance with the prices set by the DTI," the trade chief said. "We will ensure that basic goods remain accessible and affordable for all."

The DTI — a key implementing agency of the Price Act and chair of the National Price Coordinating Council — is mandated to maintain price stability and adequate supply of BNPCs.

Section 10 (5) of the Price Act provides that implementing agencies may issue suggested reasonable retail prices for any or all BNPCs

under their jurisdiction. This information guides producers, manufacturers, traders, retailers and consumers.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/20/business/top-business/food-price-increases-minimal-so-far/2041257>

THE MANILA TIMES:

DA agency sues trader for smuggling P20.8M veggies

By Giselle P. Jordan

January 20, 2025

THE Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Industry (DA-BPI) has filed a complaint against Betron Consumer Goods Trading and owner Ronnel Manalang for smuggling of P20.8 million worth of vegetables declared as frozen fish egg balls at the Subic Port.

The case, filed at the Olongapo City Prosecutor's Office, accused Betron of violating Republic Act (RA) 10611 or the Food Safety Act of 2013, and President Decree (PD) 1433 or the Plant Quarantine Law of 1978.

Details of the case said that in August 2024, five shipping containers supposedly containing frozen fish egg balls were instead found with 85,626 kilograms of yellow onions and 56,998 kilograms of carrots. The vegetables did not have sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances.

Subic Port National Plant Quarantine Services division area manager Carmela Rivera said the goods were immediately confiscated since these pose threats to public health and safety. Analysis of the confiscated vegetables also showed traces of E.coli and unregistered pesticide residues.

Betron and Manalang disregarded a show-cause order to explain their actions, which led the BPI to take further action.

Betron's importation license was revoked, and the company and its owner were blacklisted from transacting business in the agricultural sector.

The BPI noted that fraudulent documentation and misdeclaration of goods endanger public health. It also reminded the public that Food Safety Act violations entail penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/20/business/top-business/da-agency-sues-trader-for-smuggling-p208m-veggies/2041253>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Claims NFA warehouses are congested questioned

By Giselle P. Jordan

January 20, 2025

A FORMER agriculture secretary has questioned the Department of Agriculture's (DA) claim that congestion in the warehouses of the National Food Authority (NFA) prompted it to propose the declaration of a food emergency for rice.

Leonardo Montemayor said the DA has mentioned that the declaration of a food emergency would enable the NFA to sell its 300,000 metric tons of rice stocks to government entities like the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and local government units.

He said the agency claims the declaration would clear the NFA's warehouses in preparation for procurement of palay (unmilled rice) from local farmers this harvest season.

Montemayor said the NFA — through its network of warehouses — has a nationwide total storage capacity of 1,200,000 metric tons, four times bigger than its current rice stocks.

He questioned the NFA's failure to consider other ways to clear its warehouses. "In what warehouses or locations is congestion happening? If, say, in Occidental Mindoro, why weren't their stock shipped out earlier to other areas within and outside of Region 4B (Mimaropa)?" he said.

Montemayor wondered why the agency was not able to clear its warehouses, especially when the country was hit by a series of calamities last year. "How much of NFA's buffer stocks were milled and released for relief assistance to calamity victims? For rice allowances of government personnel? Didn't these withdrawals clear up enough space in NFA warehouses?" he said.

He said he wanted to know what really caused the congestion in some of the NFA's warehouses.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/20/news/national/claims-nfa-warehouses-are-congested-questioned/2041252>