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MANILA BULLETIN:

DA sets sights on record rice output this year after production slump

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Jan 20, 2025 01:07 PM

AT A GLANCE

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In a statement on Monday, Jan. 20, DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said this forecast is credited to the directive of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. to restore the agency’s budget for rice production.

Laurel noted that the program’s P10-billion budget was initially cut in the proposed national budget for this year.

“We’re now hopeful we could do better than 2023,” the DA chief said, referring to the record-high 20.06 million metric tons (MT) of palay or unmilled rice produced that year.

With a restored budget, Laurel said this is essentially a “green light” for the DA to secure the necessary resources and implement the appropriate strategies to drive palay production to its target of 20.46 million MT.

Based on preliminary estimates, the rice output for 2024 is approximately 19.3 million MT—a huge drop from the previous year’s record.

The DA cited the dry spell brought by the El Niño phenomenon early last year and the crop damage caused by La Niña in the latter part of 2024 as the factors behind the decline in rice production.

In order to reach the record-high goal in 2025, Laurel noted that the National Food Authority (NFA) will continue to intensify its rice procurement program.

Laurel, chairman of the NFA council, pointed out that the state-run agency purchased about 300,000 MT of rice last year.

He said this “strategic procurement” stabilized the country’s rice supply despite challenges in local production.

The secretary noted that the NFA’s purchase “effectively removed that amount from the market”, which he claims compelled importers to make up for the shortfall.

“This year, NFA will buy a minimum of 300,000 metric tons,” added Laurel.

Earlier, the DA reported that the Philippines hit a record-high of 4.78 million MT of rice imports in 2024. This is a 30 percent increase from the previous year’s 3.61 million MT.

The agency noted that this was triggered by a combination of factors, including lower palay production, increased procurement by the NFA, and a reduction in rice tariffs.

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<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/20/da-expects-record-high-palay-harvest-this-year-amid-decline-in-2024>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Rice cartels, hoarders must be punished-- Akbayan solon

BY [JOSEPH PEDRAJAS](#)

Jan 20, 2025 12:25 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Akbayan Party-list Rep. Perci Cendaña has called on the government to take action against rice cartels, which according to him are the only ones benefitting from high price of rice even as ordinary Filipinos struggle to make ends meet.

Akbayan Party-list Rep. Perci Cendaña has called on the government to take action against rice cartels, which according to him are the only ones benefitting from high price of rice even as ordinary Filipinos struggle to make ends meet.

Cendaña's call came as the Department of Agriculture (DA) was expected to declare a food security emergency this week after the price of imported rice now soared from P48 to P65 per kilo. The lawmaker called for punishment on those behind rice cartels for manipulating the distribution of a basic commodity and for profiteering.

"Yung pinaka-basic na pagkaing nasa hapag ng karaniwang Pilipino, hindi na niya ma-afford. Dapat nating wakasan ang profiteering ng mga rice cartels at ng mga hoarders dahil sila lang ang nakikinabang sa mataas na presyo ng bigas (Ordinary Filipinos can no longer afford the most basic of their needs. We should end the profiteering of the rice cartels and hoarders because they are the only ones benefitting from the high price of rice)," he said.

"We need to teach these greedy, exploitative businessmen a lesson — kulong kung kulong (jail them if needed). Kung hindi natin ilalabas ang pangil natin (If we won't get strict), we'll be stuck in a loophole of food security emergencies," he added.

Cendaña also emphasized how supporting local farmers can boost the local economy and prevent future food emergencies like this.

"Kung mayroon tayong (If we only have) enough locally produced rice, we would not face a food security emergency. We have to realize that this issue is rooted in our dependency on rice importation. Now, our focus should be to invest in our local farmers and ensure that our government subsidies do not negatively impact them," he said.

"We are positioned as the second fastest growing economy in Southeast Asia, and we can escalate this further by supporting our local industries," Cendaña added.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/20/rice-cartels-hoarders-must-be-punished-akbayan-solon>

MANILA BULLETIN:

San Miguel steps up to support Filipino farmers, DA joins forces

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Jan 20, 2025 10:41 AM

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Agriculture and San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI's website)

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and San Miguel Foods, Inc. (SMFI) are teaming up on their first nationwide public-private partnership (PPP) aimed at providing Filipino farmers with direct access to major buyers and streamlining the agricultural value chain.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed on Friday, Jan. 17, between the DA, represented by Undersecretary Roger Navarro, and San Miguel Foods Group General Manager Emmanuel Macalalag.

In a statement on Sunday, the DA said this collaboration is “projected to uplift the livelihood of Filipino farmers”.

The agency, in particular, noted that both parties will set up buying stations for key crops such as corn, cassava, sorghum, and soybeans.

This aims to ensure that farmers have access to institutional buyers, thus creating a stable market for their produce while yielding better financial returns.

The partnership is also eyeing to incorporate more strategies to streamline agricultural supply chains nationwide to promote long-term growth and sustainability in the sector.

In a statement on SMFI’s website, San Miguel Corporation (SMC) President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Ramon Ang said this partnership allows his conglomerate to invest directly in Filipino farmers and the future of Philippine agriculture.

“By offering fair prices and consistent support, we help farmers improve their livelihoods and make agriculture a more sustainable and rewarding industry,” said Ang.

Under the agreement, SMFI said it would share laboratory procedures for crop acceptance and conduct capacity-building seminars for DA-recognized farmer cooperatives and associations (FCAs).

Meanwhile, the DA will introduce advanced technologies to improve crop monitoring and harvest volume projections. It will likewise provide technical assistance to SMFI’s farmer partners, particularly those in DA-recognized FCAs.

The agency added that the agreement will also help farmers receive timely payments via bank transfers, noting that this addresses a “key pain point” of the sector.

Enhancing postharvest

In addition to providing greater access to buyers, the DA is also keen on improving post-harvest facilities.

“This partnership offers farmers direct access to buyers, but we must also invest in postharvest facilities to ensure high-quality crops that meet market demands,” Navarro said.

With this, the official said the agency is committed to enhancing such facilities as part of its broader agriculture strategy.

This initiative is expected to complement the marketing channels created under the partnership with SMFI.

“This public-private effort underscores the DA’s commitment to addressing the long-standing challenges of Filipino farmers while fostering a more efficient and equitable agricultural sector,” added Navarro.

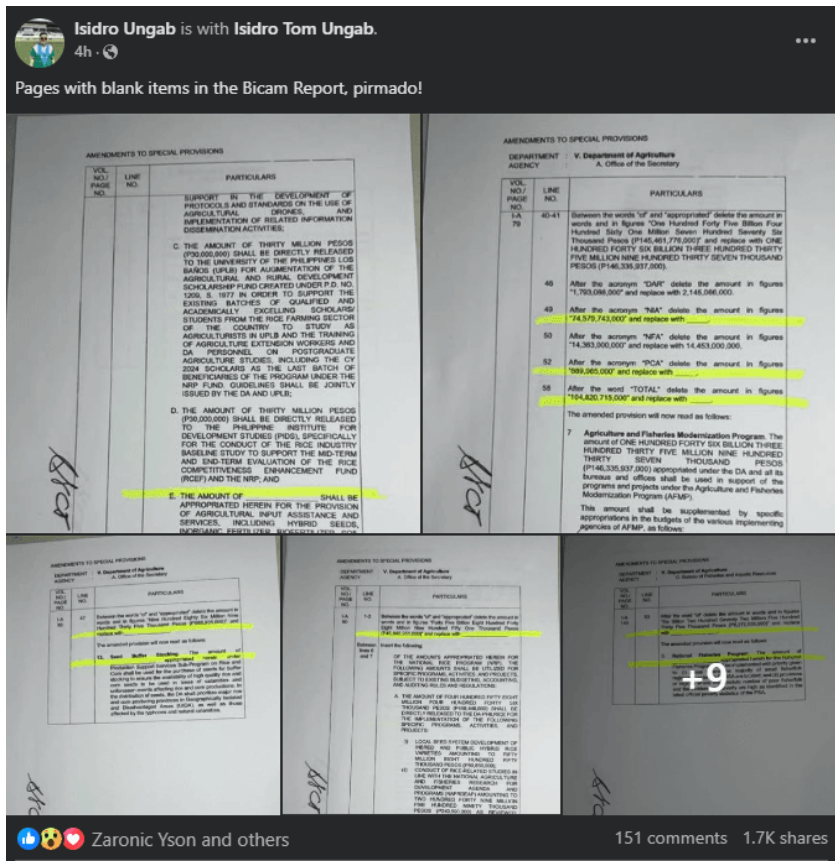
<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/20/da-san-miguel-foods-partner-to-expand-market-access-of-farmers>

Discrepancies in bicam report on 2025 budget real, not fake news – solon

BY [IVY TEJANO](#)

Jan 20, 2025 10:51 PM

DAVAO CITY – Davao City third district Rep. Isidro Ungab maintained on Monday, Jan. 20, that the observed discrepancies in the bicameral conference committee report on the 2025 national budget are not fake news and emphasized the blank items in the annual expenditure.



A copy of the report was uploaded to Ungab’s Facebook account. It highlighted its signed status and affirmed the absence of blank items in the finalized 2025 National Budget or General Appropriations Act (GAA) in response to President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.’s recent statement.

“The Bicam Report is reconciling the conflicting Lower House and Senate versions. It is the final basis of the figures reflected in the GAA. If there are blank items in the Bicam Report, how can the GAA be completed despite the blank items? Why did the members sign it?” Ungab said.

Marcos denied the accusations and stated that Ungab and former President Rodrigo Duterte lied. Executive Secretary Lucas P. Bersamin also dismissed the allegations, describing them as “outrightly malicious.” He said such misinformation should be “denounced as a criminal act.”

Duterte’s former Chief Presidential Legal Counsel, Salvador Panelo, said in a statement that the former Chief Executive was merely expressing a “legal opinion” based on Ungab’s assertion that the 2025 GAA was signed despite alleged irregularities and did not point out anyone on it.

Panelo said the elder Duterte did not specifically claim there were blank items or items without specific programs in the national budget. He urged the media to also critically examine the GAA, despite Malacañang’s denial of the allegations raised by Ungab and Duterte.

In the “Basta Dabawenyo” podcast aired on Saturday, Jan. 18, Ungab bared that parts of the budget connected to the Department of Agriculture and unprogrammed appropriation contained numerous missing figures, with some amounts totaling billions of pesos.

The lawmaker, expressing his concern on the matter, said in his 15 years in Congress, including his time as a chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, he had never encountered a bicam report with missing details.

Following Ungab’s claims, Duterte argued that if the 2025 GAA contains incomplete information, it could not be considered valid legislation. He said there must be something wrong if there were irregularities in the report.

“I would say that if any blanks were made through, it is not valid legislation. If the law contains blank or incomplete items, whether filled in before or after Congress, a fragmented or incomplete budget cannot be considered valid for implementation,” Duterte said.

The report was ratified on Dec. 11, 2024, and passed by both chambers of Congress. However, Duterte criticized the incomplete report, emphasizing that leaving blanks in a financial document is unacceptable.

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https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/20/discrepancies-in-bicam-report-on-2025-budget-real-not-fake-news-solon#google_vignette

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA launches P85 million project to boost egg output

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

January 21, 2025 | 12:00am



The DA said it would implement the chicken layer project or the LOVE project that would establish small-scale egg production in identified areas nationwide.

[Philstar.com](#) / Jovannie Lambayan

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) will roll out a P85.2-million chicken layer program this year that seeks to boost egg production in the country.

The DA said it would implement the chicken layer project or the LOVE project that would establish small-scale egg production in identified areas nationwide.

“This will provide an immediate source of food and livelihood and immediate return on investment which will redound to food security,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in the implementing guidelines of the program issued yesterday.

The DA noted that eggs remain the country’s most affordable and accessible source of protein, vitamins and essential minerals that are critical in combating malnutrition and having a healthy diet.

The DA said the target beneficiaries of the project are farmers, community groups and farmer cooperatives and associations that will be determined by the respective regional field office (RFOs) and local government units.

The identified beneficiaries would receive a module worth P79,500 that shall contain 48 heads of ready-to-lay chickens, three-tier battery cage with feeder and nipple drinker, two bags of pre-lay and six bags of layer feeds good for two-and-a-half months, set of vitamins, medications and shed type house for chicken.

The DA said there would be 11 beneficiaries in 82 provinces across all regions nationwide. The allocated budget for the distribution of the interventions to the beneficiaries is about P71.72 million. The allocation will be downloaded to the RFOs of the DA.

The DA allocated P6.52 million for the Bureau of Animal Industry, which would manage the project and P6.96 million to the Agricultural Training Institute for training and extension support. The fund would be downloaded directly to the implementing agencies.

The country's chicken egg production from January to September last year rose by six percent to 575,576 metric tons (MT) from 5423,722 MT in the same nine-month period in 2023, based on Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data.

During the nine-month period, chicken egg production was valued at P57.54 billion, contributing almost 28 percent of the country's total poultry output during the period, PSA data showed.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/01/21/2415625/da-launches-p85-million-project-boost-egg-output>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Only 2 markets violate max SRP for imported rice

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

January 21, 2025 | 12:00am



Warehouse stockmen arrange sacks of rice delivered at a National Food Authority facility in Valenzuela City yesterday.

Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — Two Metro Manila markets did not comply with the maximum suggested retail price (SRP) of P58 per kilo of imported rice after it took effect yesterday, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Guadalupe Commercial Complex in Makati City sold imported rice at P59 per kilo, while Pasay Public Market sold rice at P60 per kilo, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said.

Executive Order 62, which reduced to 15 percent the tariff on imported grains, did not result in lower rice prices.

The DA will submit a report to the Department of Trade and Industry and local government units (LGUs) regarding the two markets' non-compliance, De Mesa said.

After two weeks, he said the maximum SRP will be reviewed and could decrease to P55 per kilo.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. will have separate discussions with supermarkets to bring down rice prices, De Mesa noted.

Laurel is expected to declare a food security emergency tomorrow after reviewing the National Price Coordinating Council's resolution.

Upon the resolution's approval, De Mesa said the National Food Authority (NFA) will sell rice at P36 per kilo to local governments. Local authorities can resell the rice to the public at P38 per kilo.

NFA rice will be available in the markets starting Feb. 1, he noted.

As for the issue of congested NFA warehouses, De Mesa said this is the first time that the NFA procured rice from farmers after many years.

"The NFA has been regularly selling rice to the Department of Social Welfare and Development, but it is not enough," he said.

The NFA earlier disclosed that at least 300,000 metric tons of aging rice need to be disposed of.

Palay output

Meanwhile, about 20.46 million metric tons (MMT) of palay production is being targeted this year by the DA after President Marcos vowed to restore P10 billion for the national rice program.

The program only received an allocation of P21.68 billion in the 2025 national budget, which the DA said could be due to the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund's increased allotment, from P10 billion to P30 billion.

In 2024, the program had a P30.88-billion allocation. Its proposed 2025 budget was P31.4 billion.

Palay production in 2024 decreased to 19.3 MMT amid damage caused by successive tropical cyclones.

Tiu Laurel said palay harvest is expected to exceed last year's 20.06 MMT.

Vegetable prices

Tomato prices have dropped by half, from last week's P240 per kilo to a prevailing price of P120, De Mesa said.

The retail prices of highland and lowland vegetables also decreased: bell pepper, P300 per kilo, from P350 to P400; broccoli, P180, from P250; cabbage, P80, from P120 and cauliflower, P150, from P200.

At least 45 percent of tomato production was affected by tropical cyclones during the last quarter of 2024.

Pork prices

While 70 percent of the country's pork consumption last year came from imported meat, the retail price remains high at P450 per kilo despite tariff cuts, according to farmers' group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag).

Pork consumption in 2024 totaled 1.55 MMT, of which 733,000 MT or 70 percent came from imported pork, Sinag executive director Jayson Cainglet told The STAR, citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority and Bureau of Animal Industry.

Reduced tariffs on imported pork have been implemented since 2021, Cainglet noted.

"For the past four years, a reduced tariff did not help in bringing down the retail price (of food commodities)," he said.

Based on the DA's monitoring, the retail price of pork belly reached as high as P450 per kilo and pork shoulder, as high as P390 per kilo.

During the holidays, pork prices only reached as high as P420 per kilo.

As for the DA's claim that a supply shortage led to high pork prices, Cainglet said data showed that the total meat supply for local and imported pork was at 220 million kilos as of Dec. 31 last year.

Local pork production is expected to improve further with the expected commercial use of the African swine fever vaccine in April, Cainglet noted. — **Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/21/2415718/only-2-markets-violate-max-srp-imported-rice>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA eyes record-high 20.46MMT rice harvest with RCEF

[Dominique Nicole Flores](#) - Philstar.com

January 20, 2025 | 4:15pm



A farmer spreads palay (unhusked rice) for sun-drying under clear skies at Barangay Paligue in Candaba, Pampanga in April 2023.

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) has high hopes that the Philippines' palay production in 2025 will surpass the record-high 20.06 million metric tons produced in 2023.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said on Monday, January 20, that the early release of P10 billion from the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) under the 2025 national budget will help boost output and reach the target of 20.46 million metric tons.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. recently ordered the expedited release of the P10 billion, which is typically scheduled later in the year.

Under Republic Act 12078, or the Agricultural Tariffication Act, the RCEF was extended for another six years and allocated an annual budget of P30 billion to modernize farm equipment, enhance seed quality and improve palay farmers' productivity.

Signed into law on Dec. 9, 2024, the measure tripled the RCEF's initial annual allocation of P10 billion and extended its use until 2031.

Last year, the country fell short of its 20 million metric ton palay production target, harvesting only 19.3 million metric tons due to a series of strong typhoons that battered the country and damaged palay plantations in the last quarter of 2024.

The DA also noted the El Nino phenomenon in early 2024 that brought a “dry spell” in the country, leading to the importation of 4.75 million metric tons of rice in the past year.

The National Food Authority (NFA) procured 300,000 metric tons of rice in 2024 to maintain buffer stocks for potential food security emergencies, such as price surges or supply shortages.

For 2025, the NFA plans on purchasing a minimum of 300,000 metric tons as well to ensure the price stability of rice in case importers shoot up the price.

Bringing down rice prices

The DA has imposed on Monday a maximum suggested retail price of P58 per kilogram for imported rice in Metro Manila markets to help lower costs.

However, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said on Monday that some retailers continue to sell above the price cap.

“Many markets in Metro Manila are complying with our P58 maximum suggested retail price... Only two markets were found selling at slightly higher prices — P59 at Guadalupe Commercial Complex and P60 at Pasay Public Market,” he said in Filipino.

Meanwhile, Marcos and the DA have announced plans to [declare a food security emergency](#) this week, which would allow the NFA to release buffer stocks and stabilize rice prices.

Here are the latest rice prices in Metro Manila markets based on the DA’s monitoring as of January 15:

- **Imported Commercial Rice**
 - **Special: P53 to P65 per kilogram**
 - **Premium: P50 to P60 per kilogram**
 - **Well-milled: P44 to P52 per kilogram**
 - **Regular milled: P40 to P48 per kilogram**
- **Local Commercial Rice**
 - **Special: P55 to P63 per kilogram**
 - **Premium: P48 to P58 per kilogram**
 - **Well-milled: P40 to P53 per kilogram**
 - **Regular milled: P37 to P50 per kilogram**

The lowest prices for certain rice grades of local rice are available in only a few markets.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/01/20/2415593/da-eyes-record-high-2046mmt-rice-harvest-rcef>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Solar farms are booming in US, putting thousands of hungry sheep to work

Associated Press / 08:55 AM January 20, 2025

Sheep walk near solar panels on a solar farm owned by SB Energy on Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024, in Buckholts, Texas. (AP Photo/Ashley Landis)

BUCKHOLTS, Texas — On rural Texas farmland, beneath hundreds of rows of solar panels, a troop of stocky sheep rummage through pasture, casually bumping into one another as they remain committed to a single task: chewing grass.

The booming solar industry has found an unlikely mascot in sheep as large-scale solar farms crop up across the U.S. and in the plain fields of Texas. In Milam County, outside Austin, SB Energy operates the fifth-largest solar project in the country, capable of generating 900 megawatts of power across 4,000 acres (1,618 hectares).

How do they manage all that grass? With the help of about 3,000 sheep, which are better suited than lawnmowers to fit between small crevices and chew away rain or shine.

The proliferation of sheep on solar farms is part of a broader trend — solar grazing — that has exploded alongside the solar industry.

Agrioltaics, a method using land for both solar energy production and agriculture, is on the rise with more than 60 solar grazing projects in the U.S., according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. The American Solar Grazing Association says 27 states engage in the practice.

“The industry tends to rely on gas-powered mowers, which kind of contradicts the purpose of renewables,” SB Energy asset manager James Hawkins said.

A sunny opportunity

Putting the animals to work on solar fields also provides some help to the sheep and wool market, which has struggled in recent years. The inventory of sheep and lamb in Texas fell to 655,000 in January 2024, a 4% drop from the previous year, according to the most recent figures from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Because solar fields use sunny, flat land that is often ideal for livestock grazing, the power plants have been used in coordination with farmers rather than against them.

Shepherd JR Howard accidentally found himself in the middle of Texas' burgeoning clean energy transition. In 2021, he and his family began contracting with solar farms — sites with hundreds of thousands of solar modules — to use his sheep to eat the grass.

What was once a small business has turned into a full-scale operation with more than 8,000 sheep and 26 employees.

“Just the growth has been kind of crazy for us,” said Howard, who named his company Texas Solar Sheep. “It’s been great for me and my family.”

Following the herd

Some agriculture experts say Howard's success reflects how solar farms have become a boon for some ranchers.

Reid Redden, a sheep farmer and solar vegetation manager in San Angelo, Texas, said a successful sheep business requires agricultural land that has become increasingly scarce.

“Solar grazing is probably the biggest opportunity that the sheep industry had in the United States in several generations,” Redden said.

The response to solar grazing has been overwhelmingly positive in rural communities near South Texas solar farms where Redden raises sheep for sites to use, he said.

“I think it softens the blow of the big shock and awe of a big solar farm coming in,” Redden said.

Fielding more research

Agrivoltaics itself isn't new. Solar farms are land-intensive and require a lot of space that could be used for food production. Agrivoltaics compensates by allowing the two to coexist, whether growing food or caring for livestock.

There is a lot still unknown about the full effects of solar grazing, said Nuria Gomez-Casanovas, an assistant professor in regenerative system ecology at Texas A&M University.

Not enough studies have been done to know the long-term environmental impacts, such as how viable the soil will be for future agriculture, although Gomez-Casanovas suspects solar grazing may improve sheep productivity because the panels provide shade and can be more cost-efficient than mowing.

“We really have more questions than answers,” Gomez-Casanovas said. “There are studies that show that the land productivity is not higher versus solar alone or agriculture alone, so it's context-dependent.”

As one of Texas' largest solar sheep operators, Howard has more clients than he can handle. He expects to add about 20 more employees by the end of this year, which would nearly double his current workforce. As for the sheep, he has enough already.

<https://business.inquirer.net/502138/solar-farms-are-booming-in-us-putting-thousands-of-hungry-sheep-to-work>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Villar scolds BFAR exec over feed mill plant project in Iloilo town

By: [Zacarian Sarao](#) - Reporter / [@zacariansINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 01:55 PM January 20, 2025



FILE PHOTO: Senator Cynthia Villar, chair of the Senate committee on agriculture. – Villar berated an official of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Fisheries (BFAR) on Monday, January 20, 2025, for allowing the establishment of a government-funded feed mill plant inside a private property in Iloilo province. Screenshot from Senate Youtube

MANILA, Philippines — Senator Cynthia Villar berated an official of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Fisheries (BFAR) for allowing the establishment of a government-funded feed mill plant inside a private property in Iloilo.

Villar revealed during a hearing of her panel, the Senate committee on agriculture, on Monday that a P30-million aquaculture feed mill plant is being built on the land of the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (Seafdec) in Tigbauan town.



The senator, who presided over the hearing, was reviewing the list of existing feed mills as it tackled Senate Bill No. 2417, which proposes the establishment of a similar feed mill plant in Barangay Bahit, Panay, also in Iloilo province.

Villar noted the challenges being faced by the Tagbilaran feed mill plant project that would be erected inside Seafdec's office complex – which irked Villar, pointing out that it seemed government funds supported a private company instead of the fisherfolk.

“So, it was Seafdec who got financed, not the fishermen in their area. Why in Seafdec? If you want to build it at Seafdec, they should spend [it], not us. Isn't [the funds] for the fishermen?” Villar said in mixed Filipino and English.

She also questioned BFAR for opting to construct the feed mill plant inside private property and not on government property.

To this, BFAR Western Visayas Director Remia Aparri reasoned that Seafdec will be able to assist fisherfolk in the municipality since its office is also located in Tigbauan.

She also asserted that the management of the plant would be under the partnership of Seafdec and the government.

Villar, however, was not buying it.

“Why would you build at Seafdec and manage it with Seafdec. You should be the one managing it together with the local government. Like in fish hatcheries, BFAR initially manages in the first two years and thereafter, it is turned over to the local government,” the senator retorted in mixed Filipino and English.

“Stop. I am not a fool,” she added.

Villar also expressed concern that the BFAR official would do the same to the aquaculture feed mill plant project proposed under SB No. 2417.

Due to this, Villar ordered the technical working group to revise the proposed measure to ensure that once the feed mill plant has been established, the BFAR would solely manage the facility for the first two years and turn it over to the local government unit after the period.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2026457/villar-scolds-bfar-exec-over-feed-mill-plant-project-in-iloilo-town>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Agriculture and the young

By: [Cielito F. Habito](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 04:30 AM January 21, 2025



The graphic features a blue border and a white background. In the top left corner, there is a blue circle containing a white double quote icon. In the top right corner, the text "INQUIRER OPINION" is displayed in blue. The main text of the article is centered in a bold, black font. Below the text, the author's name "Cielito F. Habito" is written in blue, followed by "Columnist" and "NO FREE LUNCH" in black. A small portrait of the author is positioned in the bottom right corner of the graphic. At the bottom left, there is a blue banner with the text "READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE:" and logos for "PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER" and "INQUIRER PLUS".

“

**INQUIRER
OPINION**

The challenge remains, then, to keep attracting young people to take up agriculture or agribusiness as a profession, whether or not with a college degree. And it should attract not just the less capable students, as if a recourse for those not good enough to handle a more ‘glamorous’ course.

Cielito F. Habito
Columnist
NO FREE LUNCH

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E-reader and digital version

We’ve all heard the lament that young Filipinos are no longer interested in agriculture and farming as an occupation or career, and with it comes the fear that with a dwindling successor generation of farmers, our future food security is at risk. Guess what: data actually belie the supposed trend, suggesting that it’s little more than a myth widely held as unquestioned truth—at least at this time.

Data from the Commission on Higher Education showed annual enrollment in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries (AFF) courses to have nearly doubled between 2010 and 2020—that is, from 63,471 to 115,458. This figure had risen continuously from 2010 to 2016, when higher education enrollment significantly fell almost across the board. There is a ready explanation for this: 2016 was when the 2012 implementation of the K-12 basic education curriculum reduced the number of potential college freshmen because those who had completed four years of high school now had to stay for another two years. Since those two adjustment years, enrollment in AFF courses has resumed its upward trend. So is there really a decline in interest in agriculture among our youth, then?

Still, we cannot belittle common casual observations that farmers' offspring now rarely want to take over from their parents on an occupation they see to have failed to lift their families out of poverty. I wrote before of a Bicolano farmer who complained about how his children no longer help on the farm: "Tinatamad na dahil nakapag-aral" and "Pag inutusan mo, hawak cell phone" ("He has become lazy because he got educated," and "If you ask him to do anything, he can't put down his cellphone").

One might also argue that many of those who enroll in a college agriculture course do not necessarily intend or end up working on a farm, or in the AFF sector. Many end up in unrelated professions, having used an agricultural course as an "easy" way to obtain a college degree, especially when scholarships are offered for the course (and there are indeed many), and where college admission standards are lower than for other popular courses. This is the case at the University of the Philippines Los Baños, for example, where the cutoff scores in the UPCAT entrance exam tend to be set lower for BS Agriculture applicants, compared to other popular UPLB courses in the arts and sciences.

The challenge remains, then, to keep attracting young people to take up agriculture or agribusiness as a profession, whether or not with a college degree. And it should attract not just the less capable students, as if a recourse for those not good enough to handle a more "glamorous" course like computer science or engineering (i.e., when people say "mag-agriculture ka na lang"—in the same way I've heard Catholic priests complain of how parents would often tell their weaker sons, "mag-pari ka na lang.")

This is why I was inspired by the story of young Benzzone Kennedy Sepe, who I met over a year ago on his farm in Barangay Kapatagan, Digos City in Davao del Sur. I wrote about how he experimented and succeeded with planting apples out of curiosity, which led him to enroll in the BS Agriculture course at the Davao del Sur State College, even as he inspires many other young budding farmers with his vlog to think out of the box. More recently, I was heartened to hear young Denny de Guzman declare how his practicum work at the Jopat Integrated Farm in Mangaldan, Pangasinan had solidified his choice of agriculture as his favored career.

This leads me to the importance of learning sites for agriculture (LSAs) that the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) under the Department of Agriculture has been certifying for over 10 years now. I see them as valuable instruments for drawing more young people into agriculture. LSAs are model farms that can serve as venues for hands-on training of farmers and farmworkers. But many feel underutilized in this regard, as funds to support capacity building for farmers, which is the devolved responsibility of local government units, are very limited, especially when governors and mayors fail to prioritize agriculture in their local development plans

and programs. Meanwhile, the Department of Tourism has pursued the concept of farm tourism sites (FTS), with the ATI-certified LSAs as primary venues for this. It is when model farms certified as LSAs proactively attract visitors on field trips from surrounding schools as well as visits by families with children that they could be instrumental in drawing more young people to farming as a gainful enterprise. Even without conducting formal training for farmers, they would already be doing a great service to society if the farm visits and practicums they host convince more young people to choose agriculture as a favored career, the way Sepe and De Guzman have.

cielito.habito@gmail.com

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/180175/agriculture-and-the-young>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA sees record-high palay output this 2025

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:08 AM January 21, 2025

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is optimistic about hitting a new record high in palay or unmilled rice production this year, as the government restored the P10-billion additional budget for the rice program.

The DA aims to achieve its original target of 20.46 million metric tons (MT) this 2025, higher than the 2023 record of 20.06 million MT.

“We’re now hopeful we could do better than 2023,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement on Monday, adding that Mr. Marcos had given the green light to secure the necessary resources to drive palay output to more than 20 million MT.

Tiu Laurel said President Marcos’ decision to restore P10 billion in budget that had been earlier slashed out of the rice program would allow the agency to implement various strategies to attain this goal, but did not provide additional details.

In an interview on Monday, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the allocation for the National Rice Program was P21 billion under the 2025 national budget.

“We’re seeking additional P9 to P10 billion para sa rice program and it depends on the DBM (Department of Budget and Management) where they will source it. But most likely, I cannot comment on where they will secure additional funds. We’re requesting additional funds for the rice program,” said de Mesa, also the DA spokesperson. Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor said palay output over the last few years has increased minimally despite significant budget hikes.

Rice tariffication

“We have had major budget increases in the past but the output growth has been minimal, and even sometimes negative. It all depends on how that budget is spent,” Montemayor said in a Viber message.

The amended Rice Tariffication Law signed last December raised the budget for the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund to P30 billion from P10 billion.

Montemayor pointed out that only P10 billion was assured in the approved budget and the remainder would depend on unprogrammed funds.

Underperformance in 2024

“There is also no clarity on how the P20 billion in excess tariff collections in 2024 will be used. So I am confused as to where the supposed P10 billion comes from,” he added.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) is set to report next week the agriculture sector’s overall performance in 2024, including palay production.

However, the DA previously indicated that last year’s volume might have reached 19.3 million MT, falling short of the 20-million MT target level due to a series of weather disturbances that had hit the archipelago, such as the dry spell caused by the El Niño phenomenon in early 2024 and flooding brought about by La Niña in the latter part of last year. The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) earlier said that above-normal rainfall and a higher number of tropical cyclones are expected between January and March.

“Periods of cooler-than-average sea surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean that started in September 2024 continue to persist and further strengthened reaching the La Niña conditions threshold in December 2024, as shown by the recent oceanic and atmospheric indicators,” Pagasa said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the DA said the National Food Authority (NFA) was targeting to purchase at least 300,000 MT this year as part of the latter’s mandate under the RTL to maintain 15 days of allowance for national consumption. Last year, the grains agency bought palay equivalent to 300,000 MT of rice, which the DA said helped stabilize rice supply amid supply woes.

“The combination of lower palay production, higher procurement by the NFA, and a reduction in rice tariffs contributed to the country’s rice importation reaching 4.75 million metric tons in 2024,” the DA said. **INQ**

<https://business.inquirer.net/502246/da-sees-record-high-palay-output-this-25>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Palay output target set at 20.46 MMT in 2025

January 20, 2025 | 8:10 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/KRIZ JOHN ROSALES

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Monday that it is expecting the harvest of palay (unmilled rice) this year to exceed 20 million metric tons (MMT), with officials seeking to fund a rice productivity program for an additional P10 billion.

In a statement, Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said the P10 billion will fund strategies to hit a palay production target of 20.46 MMT this year.

If the target is achieved, it would represent a 6% increase from the 19.3 MMT estimate for 2024 production, and a 1.9% rise from the record 20.06 MMT posted in 2023.

“We’re now hopeful we can do better than 2023,” Mr. Laurel added.

The DA has said that the decline in production in 2024 was due to the dry spell accompanying El Niño, plus further crop damage caused by flooding during the La Niña episode late last year.

Farm damage caused by El Niño stood at P15.3 billion, according to the DA’s final estimate. Damage to rice amounted to P5.93 billion or 38.8% of the total. Lost volume was estimated at 330,717 MT, across 109,481 hectares of farmland.

The DA estimated that agricultural damage due to typhoons Kristine and Leon, which traversed the Philippines in the fourth quarter, at P9.81 billion.

The DA said record rice imports this year driven by weak palay production and the lowering of tariffs on imported rice.

“Production is directly correlated to the volume of imports. Last year, our productivity dropped to 19.3 MMT, (so) our imports shot up to 4.78 MMT,” DA spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa said.

Tariffs on imported rice were slashed to 15% from the previous 35% until 2028 by Executive Order No. 62.

The DA has tasked the National Food Authority (NFA) to continue its “aggressive” rice procurement program to build up grain reserves.

The goal is for the NFA “to fully stock its warehouses for the first time in years, which is a key development for the country’s rice security,” the DA added.

Mr. Laurel added that the NFA is seeking to procure a minimum of 300,000 MT this year.

NFA procurement for 2024 amounted to 300,000 MT or about 6 million 50-kilogram bags of palay.

“This strategic procurement helped stabilize rice supply despite challenges in local production,” the DA said.

Republic Act No. 12708 or the Agricultural Tariffication Act raised that rice buffer stock requirement of the NFA to 15 days of national consumption from the previous nine days. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/01/20/647830/palay-output-target-set-at-20-46-mmt-in-2025/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Small egg producers targeted in livelihood support program

January 20, 2025 | 8:08 pm



A vendor arranges eggs in boxes at a store along Blumentritt in Manila. — PHILIPPINE STAR/WALTER BOLLOZOS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it set aside P85.19 million to establish a network of egg production facilities for small-scale growers.

In Memorandum Order No. 2, the DA said the program will fund the construction of small-scale egg production facilities as a Livelihood Opportunities and Viable Enterprise project.

“The Chicken Layer Project involves the establishment of small egg production facilities. This project will provide an immediate source of food and livelihood and immediate returns on investment which will redound to food security,” the DA said.

It added that the project will be overseen by regional field offices, in coordination with the Bureau of Animal Industry, the National Livestock Program, the Agricultural Training Institute, and Local Government Units.

The DA’S target market for the program is farmers, community groups, and Farmer Cooperatives and Associations.

The DA said beneficiaries will receive modules, including three-tier battery layer cages, vitamins, medication, disinfectant, 48 ready-to-lay pullets, feed, veterinary supplies, and a shed.

The project has a goal of 11 beneficiaries per province. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/01/20/647826/small-egg-producers-targeted-in-livelihood-support-program/>

REMATE:

NFA bibili ng 300,000 MT bigas sa 2025

January 20, 2025 16:13



MANILA, Philippines- Nakatakdang bumili ang National Food Authority (NFA) ng hindi bababa sa 300,000 metric tons (MT) ng bigas sa 2025, kung saan kumpiyansa si Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na maaabot ng bansa ang record para sa produksyon ng palay (unmilled rice) ngayong taon.

Sinabi ni Tiu Laurel, nagsisilbing chairman ng NFA Council, nitong Lunes na bibili ang ahensya ng parehong halaga ng bigas tulad noong 2024, upang saklawin ang 15 araw ng national consumption alinsunod sa amended Rice Tariffication.

“We’re now hopeful we could do better than 2023,” pahayag ng opisyal dahil naapektuhan ng ng tagtuyot noong 2024 dahil sa El Niño phenomenon ang produksyon. Tinatayang aabot ito sa 19.3 million MT, mas mababa sa record na 20.06 million MT na naprodyus noong 2023.

Inaasahan ding magdedeklara ang DA ng food security emergency sa bigas sa Miyerkules, January 22, 2025, dahil nananatiling mataas ang presyo ng nasabing bilingin. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/nfa-bibili-ng-300000-mt-bigas-sa-2025/>

REMATE:

TINGNAN: Senate Committee on Agriculture and Agrarian Reform hearing

January 20, 2025 15:00



Larawan kuha ni Cesar Morales

MANILA, Philippines- Pinangunahan ni Sen.Cynthia Villar ang pampublikong pagdinig sa isang panukalang batas na magtatag ng isang planta ng feed mill para sa aquaculture ng Capiz. Layunin ng panukala na palakasin ang produksyon ng local na mangingisda ng probinsya. Sa pagpupulong ng Committee on Agriculture, Food, and Agrarian Reform ngayong Lunes, Enero 20, 2025, sinabi ni Villar na sa pamamagitan ng pagtiyak ng pag-access sa nutritional balance feed, ang mga mangingisda ay magkakaroon ng mas mahusay na ani habang nagbibigay ng mas malusog at mas masustansyang isda sa mga mamimili. Ang panukala ay ayon na din sa Senate Bill No. 2417 na hinain ni Sen. Si Joel Villanueva, na magtatag ng isang pabrika ng pagkain ng isda sa Bgy. Bahit, Panay sa lalawigan ng Capiz sa ilalim ng pangangasiwa ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.



Sinabi ni Villar na malaki ang nabawas sa mga isdang nakukuha sa wild fishing dahil na din sa plastic pollution. Ang pagtatatag ng pasilidad upang makagawa ng mga formulated, cost-effective, at nutritionally balanced feed ay makatutulong sa sektor ng akuakultura upang madagdagan ang mga ani nito. **Cesar Morales**

<https://remate.ph/tingnan-senate-committee-on-agriculture-and-agrarian-reform-hearing/>

REMATE:

BPI naghain ng smuggling charges vs vegetable importer

January 20, 2025 09:49



MANILA, Philippines – Naghain ang pamahalaan ng smuggling charges laban sa Betron Consumer Goods Trading at may-ari nitong si Ronnel Manalang, sa maling pagdedeklara ng P20.8 milyong halaga ng mga produkto na napag-alamang walang phytosanitary permits.

Naghain ang Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) ng reklamo sa Olongapo City Prosecutor’s Office sa paglabag sa Food Safety Act at Plant Quarantine Law of 1978.

Ang reklamo ay nag-ugat sa pagkakakumpiska ng limang shipping containers na idineklarang frozen fish balls sa Port of Subic noong Agosto 2024.

Sa inspeksyon, nadiskubre ng mga awtoridad na ang mga container na ito ay nagkukubli ng 56,998 kilo ng carrots, at 85,626 kilo ng dilaw na sibuyas, na nagkakahalaga ng P20.8 milyon.

Sa reklamo, sinabi ni Carmela Rivera, area manager para sa National Plant Quarantine Services Division ng Subic Port, na nasamsam nila ang misdeclared produce.

Ang mga ito ay walang mandatory sanitary at phytosanitary import clearances, na nagsisigurong ang mga produktong ito ay sumusunod sa umiiral na standards para maprotektahan ang kalusugan ng mga tao, halaman at hayop, at maiwasan ang pagkalat ng sakit.

“Further analysis revealed traces of E. coli and unregistered pesticide residues on the seized produce,” saad sa pahayag ng Department of Agriculture (DA).

Nauna nang ipinatawag ang Betron at si Manalang ngunit inindyan nito ang show-cause order na inisyu sa kanila, dahilan para maghain ng reklamo ang BPI noong Disyembre 9, 2024 na nagresulta sa pagbawisa importation license ng Betron.

Blacklisted na rin ang mga ito sa pakikilahok sa mga operasyon sa agricultural sector.

Ang mapapag-alaman na guilty sa paglabag sa Food Safety Act ay mahaharap sa multang mula P50,000 hanggang P500,000 at suspensyon, o permanent revocation ng authorization to operate a food business. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/bpi-naghain-ng-smuggling-charges-vs-vegetable-importer/>

REMATE:

Deklarasyon ng food security emergency, suportado ng SINAG

January 20, 2025 08:44



MANILA, Philippines – Suportado ng farmers group na Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) ang planong deklarasyon ng food security emergency ng Department of Agriculture kasabay ng mataas na presyo ng bigas at iba pang produkto.

Ayon kay SINAG president Rosendo So, mapapababa ng deklarasyon ang presyo ng bigas na mula P40 hanggang P59.77 kada kilo sa Metro Manila.

“I think ‘yung declaring, ito is para at least yung NFA [National Food Authority] rice is pwedeng magbenta at lower price, no? Welcome development ‘yan at sinusuportahan namin para at least bumaba ‘yung presyo,” ani So.

Ito ay kasunod ng pag-apruba ng National Price Coordinating Council sa resolusyon na humihimok sa DA na ideklara ang food security emergency sa bigas.

Ani So, hindi lamang mga consumer ang makikinabang sa deklarasyon kundi maging ang mga magsasaka dahil kailangang bumili ng NFA ng bugger stock mula sa kanila para mapalitan ang suplay sa oras na mailabas na ang kasalukuyang stock sa publiko.

“Hindi naman lugi ‘yung magsasaka rito, at bibili sila [NFA] ng replacement for itong madidistribute sa LGU [local government unit],” sinabi pa niya.

Kamakailan ay sinabi ng DA na inaasahan nitong matatanggap ang kopya ng resolusyon ngayong araw, Enero 20 at ang deklarasyon ay sa Miyerkules, Enero 22. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/deklarasyon-ng-food-security-emergency-suportado-ng-sinag/>

ABANTE:

DA inisnab sa 58 maximum SRP ng bigas

Abante News

- **January 20, 2025**



Mas mataas pa rin sa P58 ang bentahan ng bigas ng ilang mga tindero sa Kamuning Public Market sa Quezon City. Ito ay sa kabila ng kautusan ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na hindi na dapat lalagpas sa P58 kada kilo ang maximum suggested retail price ng mga bigas simula ngayong Lunes, Enero 20.

Ayon sa ilang nagtitinda nakausap ng Abante Radyo, hindi pa nakakarating sa kanila ang kautusan na ito kaya't hindi pa nila naipapatupad. Samantala, malaki naman ang nilobo ng presyo ng baboy na ngayon ay nasa P400 mula sa dating P320 kada kilo at ang manok na tumaas naman sa P220 mula sa dating P190 kada kilo.

Wala naman naging pagbabago sa presyo ng gulay mula sa nakaraang linggo. Nauna nang sinabi ng DA na balak pa nilang ibaba sa P50 ang MSRP ng bigas pagsapit ng Marso kung patuloy sa pagbagsak ang presyo ng imported rice. (Migo Fajatin)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/01/20/da-inisnab-sa-58-maximum-srp-ng-bigas/>

MANILA STANDARD:

‘Food security emergency to take effect Feb.’



RICE REMAINS A CEREAL ISSUE. Newly delivered rice from Regions 2 and 3 stored at National Food Authority warehouse in Valenzuela City are being loaded on delivery vans for distribution to retail outlets across Metro Manila ahead of the projected food security emergency being espoused by the Department of Agriculture. Manny Palmero

By Othel V. Campos

January 21, 2025, 12:20 am

The Department of Agriculture is moving forward with efforts to address rice pricing and food security challenges, with DA Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. expected to act on a food security emergency declaration by Wednesday.

This follows the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) recommendations for a food emergency declaration given the lofty prices of rice in the local market.

DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said that while the resolution copy has yet to reach the DA as of Monday, “the Secretary announced that the review process would begin immediately upon receipt, ensuring action is finalized before the February 1 target.”

Despite the decision resting at the secretary’s level, Tiu Laurel committed to consulting with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who has previously expressed support for declaring a food security emergency.

The DA also said it continues its strict monitoring of compliance with the P58 maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice.

Reports indicate strong adherence in markets such as Las Piñas, Marulas, Mandaluyong, Marikina, Pasig, Malabon, and others.

However, non-compliance was noted at the Guadalupe Commercial Complex and Pasay Public Market, where prices of P59 and P60 were observed, respectively.

“We’re pleased with the high compliance rate across Metro Manila markets. After two weeks, the Secretary will review the MSRP, targeting a potential reduction to P55 per kilo,” De Mesa said.

The current MSRP was set to provide value chain players time to adjust contracts and release older stocks.

The DA has observed market prices as low as P51, with most falling between P51 and P57. As of present, imported premium rice is at P55/kg, P48/kg for imported well-milled rice, and P40 for imported regular-milled rice.

Discussions are also underway with supermarkets, where rice prices are typically higher due to added convenience for shoppers.

To ease the burden on rice vendors, the DA is exploring rental reductions in public and private markets.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314548908/food-security-emergency-to-take-effect-feb.html>

MANILA STANDARD:

DA expects bumper rice harvest this year to surpass 2023 record

By Othel V. Campos

January 20, 2025, 8:25 pm

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. is optimistic about achieving bumper rice production in 2025, rebounding from last year's slump and exceeding the previous record palay harvest of 20.46 million metric tons (MT) in 2023.

Tiu Laurel said the DA was motivated to aim for higher yield following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s directive to restore the Department of Agriculture's (DA) rice production budget. "We're now hopeful we could do better than 2023," he said.

Rice production faced setbacks in 2024 amid a prolonged dry spell from El Niño and flooding from La Niña, resulting in an estimated output of 19.3 million metric tons, below the 2023 levels.

To bolster rice security, the National Food Authority (NFA) will continue its aggressive procurement program, which helped fully stock warehouses last year.

Tiu Laurel, who is also the NFA chairman, reported that agency purchased 300,000 metric tons of palay in 2024, stabilizing supply despite production challenges.

This year, the agency aims to buy at least the same amount. Under the amended Rice Tariffication Law, the NFA's buffer stock requirement increased from 9 days to 15 days of national consumption.

Meanwhile, a combination of reduced palay output, higher NFA procurement and lower rice tariffs drove rice imports to 4.75 million metric tons in 2024.

The government aims to boost local production, while continuing rice imports, to meet rising demand and stabilize the prices.

The DA prescribed a maximum suggested retail price of P58 per kilogram of imported rice to prevent profiteering among traders amid indications that the drastic drop in import tariff did not translate into equivalent reduction in retail prices of the main staple.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314548948/da-expects-bumper-rice-harvest-this-year-to-surpass-2023-record.html>

THE MANILA TIMES:

DA: Restored budget will boost rice output

By Giselle P. Jordan
January 21, 2025

AGRICULTURE Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. is optimistic the country can surpass its 2023 record of 20.06 million metric tons (MT) of local palay production this year, following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s order to restore the DA's rice production budget.

"We're now hopeful we could do better than 2023," Tiu Laurel said, noting that the reinstatement of the P10-billion budget cut from the DA's rice program will enable the agency to hit its 20.46 million MT target for 2025.

Initial estimates of 19.3 million MT in rice output for 2024 faced challenges due to the El Niño climate disruption early last year and crop damage from flooding due to La Niña in the latter part of that year.

Tiu Laurel added that the National Food Authority (NFA) will continue its rice procurement program, which resulted in its warehouses being fully stocked for the first time in years, thus ensuring rice security for the country.

In 2024, NFA bought palay (unmilled rice) equal to 300,000 MT of rice, which helped stabilize rice supply despite shortfalls in local production.

"This year, NFA will buy a minimum of 300,000 MT," Tiu Laurel said.

The amended Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) signed last month raised the NFA's buffer stock requirements from nine to 15 days of national consumption.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/21/business/top-business/da-restored-budget-will-boost-rice-output/2041596>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Exporters group urges compliance with EU rules

By Janine Alexis Miguel

January 21, 2025

COMPLIANCE with the European Green Deal's sustainability requirements will lead to more business opportunities in the European Union (EU) market, the Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. (Philexport) said in a statement, in light of the EU-Philippines Partnership Conference held in December 2024.

In the conference, International Trade Center associate expert Michaela Summerer explained the scope of the European Green Deal — which aims for the EU's climate, energy, transport and taxation policies to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 percent by 2030, compared to 1990 levels, and for the EU to reach climate neutrality by 2050.

The Deal covers over 50 policies and legislative measures. One of these is the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) which takes effect on Dec. 30, 2025. It prohibits the trade of commodities such as cattle, coffee, cocoa, palm oil, rubber, soy and wood — unless certified as deforestation-free and produced in accordance with relevant legislation of the country of production.

□ [SC decides vs bank in loan payment case](#)

"[There is] an obligation on companies placing products on the market or exporting them to exercise 'due diligence' to ensure their compliance with these criteria," Summerer said. She noted operators must provide the geolocation of the production site and a self-declaration, supported by relevant documentation through the EU's Deforestation Due Diligence Registry.

Another regulation is the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) which will be fully operational by 2026. It will impose a carbon tax on high-emission imports like steel, cement, aluminum, and fertilizers.

"Exporters have to report their carbon content and pay a fee based on the difference between their country's carbon price and the EU's," Summerer said.

The Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), also expected to take effect in 2026, sets sustainability standards for energy-related products, textiles, furniture and packaging, among others.

It will feature a digital product passport to track environmental compliance.

The ESPR framework also enables concrete design requirements for products focusing on energy efficiency, recyclability, durability, and reduction of hazardous substances through delegated acts.

Summerer urged exporters to collaborate to streamline preparedness and ensure compliance.

"Suppliers to the EU market may be indirectly affected by the EU Green Deal policies, i.e. they might not have the reporting obligation under the respective legislation, yet will be asked by their buyers for relevant documentation and evidence," she pointed out.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/21/business/top-business/exporters-group-urges-compliance-with-eu-rules/2041595>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Group opposes Laguna Lakeshore road project

By Giselle P. Jordan

January 21, 2025

THE advocacy organization Save Laguna Lake Movement (SLLM) is opposing a deal for South Korea to provide the Philippines a loan of \$905 million or P54 billion for the Laguna Lakeshore Road Network (LLRN) Project, saying the land reclamation and its conversion will ruin the lake itself and its uses.

The loan amount will fund Phase 1 and Stage 1 of the project.

SLLM, a network of organizations, individuals and advocates for the preservation and rehabilitation of Laguna de Bay, said in a statement that the project will cause adverse effects on the biodiversity in the lake and make fisherfolk suffer from lesser catch.

It asserted the project would lead to flooding, blocking the natural passageways of water from the mountains, thus affecting residents who live around the lake.

With the LLRN Project, the Marcos administration will disregard the livelihood of residents around the lake and fail to develop the fisheries sector, SLLM said, adding that, instead of prioritizing the problems of fisherfolk and residents, the government is implementing anti-environment and anti-people projects like the LLRN.

The organization called on the public to join its call against projects like the LLRN, and warned of a possible food crisis if the government proceeds with the project.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/21/business/top-business/group-opposes-laguna-lakeshore-road-project/2041591>

THE MANILA TIMES:

DA to provide rice seeds to farmers

By Leander C. Domingo

January 21, 2025

THE Department of Agriculture Regional Field Office 2 (DA-RFO2) has issued a memorandum to ensure the immediate delivery of rice seeds to farmers affected by the shear line in Cagayan province.

DA regional executive director Rose Mary Aquino said the memorandum outlined the allocation of hybrid and inbred rice seeds for delivery "to support farmers in the province of Cagayan affected by the recent shear line-induced calamity."

Aquino also emphasized the urgency of the initiative in a memorandum dated Jan. 15, 2025, adding that the rice seeds, sourced from different sites across the region are scheduled for delivery to the DA-Southern Cagayan Research Center (SCRC) in Minanga Norte in Iguig town no later than Jan. 22, 2025.

"The timely delivery and distribution of these seeds are critical to replanting efforts and restoring agricultural productivity in the affected areas," she said.

Barby Lagajet-Balcita of the DA Region 2 Agriculture and Fisheries Information Section, said that the allocated rice seeds include 891 bags of hybrid varieties such as SL8, US 88, TH82, Biorice, LP, Jackpot, Bigante, Rc 222, and Rc 508 from Isabela.

Balcita said 481 bags of Jackpot and LP 534 seeds were sourced from the municipalities of Saguday and Diffun in Quirino province while the province of Nueva Vizcaya contributed 1,227 bags of hybrid seeds, including SL-19, SL8, LP937, US 88, TH82, and Jackpot, sourced from areas like Bagabag, Bambang, Aritao, and other municipalities.

She said that 2,599 bags of hybrid and inbred rice seeds will be distributed, ensuring the affected farmers can begin replanting their fields.

Meanwhile, Balcita said that the report from the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist of Cagayan showed that the recent shear line has severely impacted 16,156.95 hectares of farmland across the province.

This includes 7,144.76 hectares of totally damaged areas and 9,012.19 hectares of partially damaged areas.

Balcita said Cagayan's District 1 recorded the highest level of damage, affecting 8,853.30 hectares.

Aparri town had some 2,890 hectares affected followed by Camalaniugan with 2,015 hectares and Buguey with 1,115.10 hectares while other municipalities such as Lal-lo, Alcala and Baggao also suffered significant losses.

Balcita also noted that to prioritize recovery in the hardest-hit areas, partial deliveries of rice seeds were made to the Municipality of Aparri to facilitate quicker replanting and minimize further losses.

According to the report, District 2 has a total of 4,581.81 hectares affected, with Ballesteros recording 2,693 hectares, Allacapan 1,097 hectares, and Lasam 540.95 hectares.

District 3 reported 2,721.84 hectares of damage. Solana accounted for the majority, with 1,907.76 hectares affected, while Amulung and Peñablanca experienced losses of 799.08 hectares and smaller portions, respectively.

Aquino, meanwhile, thanked the Field Operations Division and Rice Program, the Research Center and Experiment Station Managers, Agricultural Program coordinating officers and local government units for facilitating the rapid mobilization of resources.

She said that through timely interventions, the agency aims to "mitigate the impact of natural disasters and help rebuild the region's agricultural sector."

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/21/regions/da-to-provide-rice-seeds-to-farmers/2041482>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

New palay output record seen if P10-B fund restored

Ada Pelonia

January 21, 2025

RESTORING the P10 billion budget for the rice program could help set a new record palay output in 2025, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s directive to restore the P10-billion in budget cuts for the National Rice Program (NRP) would allow the agency to implement measures that would hit its palay production target of 20.46 million metric tons (MMT) this year.

“We’re now hopeful we could do better than 2023,” Laurel said in a statement, referring to the record-high 20.06 MMT of palay produced that year.

The country’s palay production last year was beset with challenges as the combination of dry spell from El Niño and flooding during La Niña ravaged rice plantations. This prompted the agency to lower its palay output forecast in 2024 to 19.3 MMT.

DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa noted that the NRP’s budget might have been slashed due to the amended Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) which tripled the annual allocation for Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

“The budget might have been cut because a lot was already given to RCEF from P10 billion to P30 billion,” De Mesa told reporters in Filipino during a briefing on Monday.

He said the NRP’s budget under the 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA) currently stands at P21 billion. If the budget restoration is realized, the program’s coffers could settle at P31 billion.

Meanwhile, Laurel also stressed that the National Food Authority (NFA) would continue its rice procurement program.

“This program allowed the NFA to fully stock its warehouses for the first time in years, which is a key development for the country’s rice security,” the DA said.

Earlier, he reported that the NFA purchased palay equivalent to 300,000 metric tons (MT) of rice, which the agency said “helped stabilize rice supply despite challenges in local production.”

“This year, NFA will buy a minimum of 300,000 metric tons,” Laurel said.

The amended RTL raised the grain agency’s rice buffer stock to cover 15 days of national consumption from the previous nine days.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/21/new-palay-output-record-seen-if-p10-b-fund-restored/>

ABANTE TONITE:

Bigat ng batas pinush sa Kongreso: `Ilabas ang pangil kontra rice cartel`

January 20, 2025

Hinamon ng isang mambabatas ang pamahalaan na ilabas ang pangil ng batas at sampolan ang mga negosyanteng sangkot sa rice cartel.

Ayon kay Akbayan Party-list Rep. Perci Cendaña, dapat mayroong makasuhan na mapagsamantalang negosyante sa likod ng mataas na presyo ng bigas

“Yung pinaka-basic na pagkaing nasa hapag ng karaniwang Pilipino, hindi na niya ma-afford. Dapat nating wakasan ang profiteering ng mga rice cartels at ng mga hoarder dahil sila lang ang nakikinabang sa mataas na presyo ng bigas,” sabi ni Cendaña.

Gigil ang kongresista na kastiguhin ang mga negosyanteng sangkot sa patuloy na taas-presyo ng bigas.

“We need to teach these greedy, exploitative businessmen a lesson — kulong kung kulong. Kung hindi natin ilalabas ang pangil natin, we’ll be stuck in a loophole of food security emergencies,” dagdag pa nito.

Samantala, sinabi ni Cendaña na mahalagang mabigyan ng sapat na pondo ang mga magsasaka upang maiwasan ang pangangailangan na magdeklara ng food security emergency dahil sa mataas na presyo o kawalan ng suplay ng bigas.

“Kung mayroon tayong enough locally produced rice, we would not face a food security emergency. We have to realize that this issue is rooted in our dependency on rice importation. Now, our focus should be to invest in our local farmers and ensure that our government subsidies do not negatively impact them,” sabi ng kongresista.

“We are positioned as the second fastest growing economy in Southeast Asia, and we can escalate this further by supporting our local industries,” dagdag pa ni Cendaña. (Billy Begas)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/01/20/bigat-ng-batas-pinush-sa-kongreso-ilabas-ang-pangil-kontra-rice-cartel/>