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Price cap on imported rice to go as low as P49 in March

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Retail stores to sell P29-P45/kilo rice by mid-February

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Price cap on imported rice to go as low as P49 in March

BY DEXTER BARRO II

Jan 24, 2025 03:18 PM

AT A GLANCE

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“By March 1, hopefully, we will break P50 per kilo, with the MSRP at P49, as long as world prices remain as they are today—a maximum landed cost of \$530 to \$550 per metric ton for 5 percent broken rice,” he said in an interview on Friday.

The DA chief explained that announcing these plans early will give industry players a window for an “orderly transition”.

“This would allow them to liquidate higher-priced stocks and renegotiate contracts with suppliers,” he said.

Laurel said the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is currently finalizing the guidelines for rice labeling. Once this is released to the public, the DA shall implement the MSRP for each type of rice.

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“You cannot just shock the market...a lot of people will go out of business, and many will resist our efforts, and that is what we are trying to avoid,” he stressed.

According to Laurel, imported rice currently being sold in public markets was purchased at around \$700 per metric ton.

Citing data from the Bureau of Customs (BOC), he pointed out that the price of 5 percent broken rice from Asian exporters ranges from \$413 to \$472 per metric ton (MT).

Vietnam, in particular, is offering the lowest price at \$413. The Southeast Asian country has quoted the 25 percent broken variety at a price of \$387 per MT.

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<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/24/price-cap-on-imported-rice-to-go-as-low-as-p49-in-march>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Bohol kicks off P608-M farm-to-market road project

BY CALVIN CORDOVA

Jan 24, 2025 06:58 PM

CEBU CITY – The provincial government of Bohol on Thursday, Jan. 23, broke ground on the 12-kilometer farm-to-market road linking two towns in the province.



AUMENTADO (FB)

Considered as the largest project in the history of the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP), the project links Desamparados, Calape to Tabuan, Antequera.

The P608-million project is funded through a World Bank loan accounted to the national government, with Bohol as the grant recipient.

Bohol Gov. Aris Aumentado emphasized the importance of the project, highlighting the necessity of protecting and nurturing it to enhance agricultural production.

He assured that the provincial government is fully committed to making it successful, as shown by its P60-million funding contribution to the initiative.

Aumentado stated that if further developments are needed, the province, through the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist, is prepared to strengthen its collaboration with the PRDP, the Department of Agriculture (DA), and the World Bank.

The rehabilitation and upgrading of the Desamparados–Tabuan Farm-to-Market Road aims to improve accessibility, boost agricultural productivity, and drive economic growth in the province. The project includes the construction of four major bridges – Desamparados, Labuon, Binogawan, and Cabayugan. The project will pass through seven barangays in Calape and Antequera, covering a 4,060-hectare area that influences agriculture, residential areas, and mangrove zones.

The project is seen to benefit 3,842 households, which include 2,817 farming families and 410 fishing households.

Moreover, it aims to greatly enhance transportation and agricultural productivity in the area. Upon completion, it seeks to reduce the average commute time from 24.29 minutes to just 10.34 minutes. It also aims to increase traffic volume from 150 vehicles in the initial year to 230 vehicles by the 20th year.

It will also cultivate 525 hectares of idle land over the next 20 years, transforming underutilized areas into productive agricultural zones. These efforts are expected to enhance food security and promote economic development in the region.

The project includes environmental protections, with the road traversing a 7.36-hectare mangrove area to minimize ecological disruption.

A designated 429.412-hectare residential zone will accommodate the growing population and provide space for sustainable communities.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/24/bohol-kicks-off-p608-m-farm-to-market-road-project>

DA sets sight on soaring pork prices to curb potential profiteering

BY DEXTER BARRO II

Jan 24, 2025 02:32 PM

AT A GLANCE

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“But of course, we’re already computing the value chain like we did in rice. And to see kung paano mate-temper ito (how this can be tempered),” Laurel told reporters on Thursday, Jan. 23.

Essentially, the value chain is the range of activities done to bring a product through different phases of production into the consumer’s plate.

As of Wednesday, prices of pork belly in Metro Manila ranged from P360 to P380, while pork kasim (ham) within P340 to P400.

On the other hand, the frozen pork variety is priced at P230 to P280 for kasim and P270 to P350 for liempo (belly).

Laurel said he has been closely monitoring these prices for the last two weeks.

“Ang farmgate ngayon ay is only P220 to 240, so there seems to be a similar problem sa rice eh,” he explained.

(The farmgate price now is only P220 to 240, so there seems to be a similar problem with rice.)

The agriculture secretary said fair profit margin should limit retail prices of live pig to P300-P320 per kilo.

However, he is still uncertain on whether the high prices of pork are a consequence of potential profiteering in the industry.

“Give me two weeks then I will tell you if mayro’n man o hindi (there is or not),” he told the press.

The DA earlier claimed that the surge in pork prices is caused by the impact of African Swine Fever (ASF) and the huge demand for the commodity during the holiday season of 2024.

It is projected that prices will fall by February, as hog raisers recover their livestock numbers.

Laurel was mum when asked if the agency is considering the implementation of a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) on pork.

The DA earlier implemented such on imported rice, set at P58, to ensure that rice remains profitable for consumers.

Putting an end to agri smuggling

On Friday, Laurel expressed his concerns over alleged agricultural smuggling during his monitoring visit to the Pasay City public market.

The DA chief identified vegetables such as onion sticks, Chinese yam, large broccoli, and pepper as potentially smuggled goods.

He said such items have no Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearances (SPSICs), which puts into question if these are safe for consumption.

“I don’t recall the Bureau of Plant Industry issuing SPSICs for these vegetables. This strongly indicates smuggling,” he continued.

With this, Laurel is urging the DA and related agencies to investigate and possibly even pursue legal action against the perpetrators.

Department of Trade and Industry Assistant Secretary Agaton Uvero, who was also present during the market visit, emphasized the need for the Bureau of Customs (BOC) to issue seizure orders for smuggled goods.

He said consumers must be wary of health risks linked to unregulated imports, noting that these could contain harmful substances like pesticides and heavy metals.

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MANILA BULLETIN:

Retail stores to sell P29-P45/kilo rice by mid-February

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BY DEXTER BARRO II

Jan 24, 2025 01:35 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Food security emergency declaration on rice set on Feb. 1
 - The maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice, currently set at P58-per-kilo, will gradually decrease with a potential to go as low as P49 in March if global prices remain stable
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Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel is optimistic that the planned rollout of affordable rice, with prices ranging from P29 to P45 per kilo, in groceries and convenience stores starting Feb. 15 will help influence the market “to be more reasonable.”

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“Napaliwanagan naman sila (They were made to understand), it’s technically business as usual. Everybody just has to help out,” he said.

The DA chief said the retail chains are set to meet with officials of the Food Terminal Inc. (FTI), a state-owned corporation tasked to handle the supply of rice through participating stores.

Once the details are finalized, Laurel said he will oversee another meeting, with the program expected to launch by mid-February or, at the latest, March 1.

The DA had earlier said this program would be piloted in Metro Manila, wherein rice prices were monitored to be high.

Laurel, however, clarified that the availability of the affordable rice will rely on the decision of retail stores.

“Depende na sa kanila kung saang reach eh. Ang usapan naman hindi naman lahat ng stores lalagyan [ng bigas] kasi there’s limitation on space eh,” he added. (It depends on them where they’ll focus on. The agreement is that not all stores will be provided with rice because there’s a limitation on space.)

This initiative shall be composed of the P29-per-kilo rice, which will only be available for the country’s vulnerable sectors, as well as the DA’s Rice-for-All (RFA) program.

Various rice grades are offered under the RFA, including RFA5 or the 5 percent broken rice priced at P45-per-kilo; RFA 25 or the 25 percent broken at P38; and RFA 100 or the 100 percent broken at P36.

The agriculture secretary said retail stores, with enough space to install kiosks, will sell rice in sacks with a takal (measuring cup) to boot.

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Food emergency declaration looms

The DA chief also told reporters that the target date for the implementation of a food security emergency for rice is Feb. 1, with its guidelines set to be released before the end of the month.

Initially, the agency said it was expecting to declare the emergency last Wednesday.

However, this has since been delayed as the National Price Coordinating Council’s (NPCC) approved resolution is still making the rounds within the DA.

“Approved na ‘yung principle technically, it’s the fine print eh (It’s approved in principle, technically, it’s just the fine print now),” said Laurel.

The NPCC, led by Trade Secretary Ma. Cristina Roque, recently issued a resolution urging the DA to declare a food security emergency as rice prices remain high.

Under this, the National Food Authority (NFA) will be allowed to release buffer stock rice to stabilize local prices.

The NFA currently holds 300,000 metric tons of rice in buffer stocks.

Laurel, also the chairperson of the NFA Council, said their intention is to “flush out” the stocks within six months.

The plan for the disbursement is to release the stocks in areas with close proximity to the warehouses for minimal freight cost.

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However, he is still uncertain on whether the high prices of pork are a consequence of potential profiteering in the industry.

“Give me two weeks, then I will tell you if mayroon man o hindi (there is or there is not),” he told the press.

The DA had earlier claimed that the surge in pork prices is caused by the impact of African Swine Fever (ASF) and the huge demand for the commodity during the holiday season last year.

It is projected that prices will fall by February as hog raisers recover their livestock numbers.

Laurel was mum when asked if the agency is considering the implementation of a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) on pork.

The DA had earlier issued MSRP on imported rice, set at P58, to ensure that rice remains profitable for consumers.

Agri smuggling

On Friday, Laurel expressed his concerns over the alleged agricultural smuggling during his monitoring visit to the Pasay City public market.

The DA chief identified vegetables such as onion sticks, Chinese yam, large broccoli, and pepper as potentially smuggled goods.

He said such items have no Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearances (SPSICs), which puts into question if these are safe for consumption.

“I don’t recall the Bureau of Plant Industry issuing SPSICs for these vegetables. This strongly indicates smuggling,” he continued.

With this, Laurel is urging the DA and related agencies to investigate and possibly even pursue legal action against the perpetrators.

Department of Trade and Industry Assistant Secretary Agaton Uvero, who was also present during the market visit, emphasized the need for the Bureau of Customs (BOC) to issue seizure orders for smuggled goods.

He said consumers must be wary of health risks linked to unregulated imports, noting that these could contain harmful substances like pesticides and heavy metals.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/24/retail-stores-to-sell-p29-p45-kilo-rice-by-mid-february>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Farmers' group slams DA's 'incompetence' amid food security crisis

BY JEL SANTOS

Jan 25, 2025 05:19 PM



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. (JEL SANTOS/MB PHOTO)

Progressive farmers' group Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) has called out the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Marcos administration for their failure to address the country's worsening food security crisis, describing the agency's policies as "disastrous" for Filipino farmers and consumers.

In a statement, KMP chairperson Danilo Ramos lambasted the DA, headed by Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., for its failure to address the underlying issues plaguing the rice industry, including rampant hoarding and smuggling.

He said President Marcos' Executive Order (EO) 62, which was intended to lower rice prices by cutting tariffs on imported rice, worsened the crisis instead.

"This policy was nothing short of a betrayal. EO 62 served the interests of profiteers while crushing the livelihoods of local farmers and bleeding the government of revenues," Ramos said, citing the P9.1 billion in tariff revenue losses incurred by the government.

According to KMP, the policy also caused local palay (unmilled rice) prices to drop by 8.4 percent, devastating farmers' incomes.

The KMP, meanwhile, stated that importers and traders pocketed P7.265 billion in profits without passing on savings to consumers.

The farmers' group also criticized the inefficacy of the DA's schemes, such as the maximum suggested retail price for rice, which they claimed has only benefited big traders and importers while ignoring the plight of farmers and consumers.

"The Marcos administration is perpetuating a cycle of import dependence and agricultural abandonment," said Ramos.

He pointed out that the Philippines remains the world's top rice importer, with projections reaching 5.22 million metric tons in 2025.

Ramos also called the Food Security Emergency a "glaring wake-up call," urging the government to strengthen local rice production instead of relying on importation.

"We cannot rely on imported rice or half-hearted measures to address a crisis born from decades of state neglect and the exploitation of our agricultural sector," he said.

Also, Ramos demanded the immediate repeal of the Rice Liberalization Law (RA 11203) and Executive Order 62, which he said have deepened the rice crisis and perpetuated the suffering of farmers and ordinary Filipinos.

"The so-called Food Security Emergency is nothing more than an admission that the Rice Liberalization Law is a monumental disaster," he said.

"This law has shackled Filipino farmers to the mercy of a liberalized market dominated by unscrupulous importers and traders while forcing consumers to endure exorbitant rice prices."

The group vowed to intensify its calls for genuine agrarian reform and national industrialization, joining protests on January 31 to hold the administration accountable for what it called "poverty, corruption, and impunity" under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

"The Marcos administration must act decisively. Scrap the Rice Liberalization Law and EO 62 now. Strengthen local rice production and prioritize the welfare of Filipino farmers and consumers," Ramos said.

In 2024, the Philippines imported a record-breaking 4.78 million MT of rice, a nearly 30 percent increase from the 3.61 million MT recorded in 2023, per the DA.

Data from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) revealed that Vietnam remained the country's largest rice supplier, contributing 75 percent of the total imports or 3.56 million MT. Other key suppliers included Thailand with 598,157 MT and Pakistan with 283,517 MT. Additional imports came from Myanmar, India, China, Japan, Cambodia, Italy, and Spain.



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. (JEL SANTOS/MB PHOTO)

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<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/25/farmers-group-slams-da-s-incompetence-amid-food-security-crisis>

DA: Local rice sector growing after tariffication law

BY DEXTER BARRO II

Jan 25, 2025 02:51 PM

The Philippines' rice industry has been making significant strides since the enactment of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) in 2019, driven by sustained collaboration of the government, farmers, and local authorities, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In a statement, the DA said initiatives such as the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) and the National Rice Program (NRP) played a pivotal role in the sector's growth.

The RTL, embodied in Republic Act (RA) No. 11203, created the RCEF which established the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Program (RCEP) that oversees the NRP.

Essentially, these programs are aimed at empowering farmers and promoting the adoption of modern farming technologies.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) told Manila Bulletin that various studies and reports over the years reinforce the impressive gains observed by the rice industry.

For instance, PhilRice itself has provided free high-quality inbred seeds to 1.77 million farmers by August of last year.

Meanwhile, The DA in 2023 expanded the RCEF's coverage from 57 to 77 provinces. This increase benefitted over a million farmers, particularly those in remote communities.

Since it was established in 2019, the RCEF's Mechanization Program has so far delivered 29,599 units of farming equipment, including machines for land preparation, harvesting, and milling.

According to the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech), this initiative has reduced labor costs by P2 per kilo of palay or unmilled rice and boosted farm income by P9,000 per hectare.

The DA noted that continued investment in technology has enhanced the mechanization level of rice farms to 2.77 horsepower per hectare (HP/ha) in 2024, which increased from 2.68 HP/ha in 2019.

These efforts, combined with improved yields in irrigated and rainfed areas, ultimately led to a record-high palay production of 20.06 million metric tons (MT) in 2023.

PhilRice pointed out that farmers benefiting from the RCEF program saw higher yields in both the dry and wet seasons.

Between 2019 and 2023, dry-season yields jumped from 3.63 MT per hectare to 4.34 MT, while wet-season yields rose from 3.69 MT to 4.03 MT.

Additionally, production costs saw a downtrend of P1.65 per kilo during the dry season and P0.42 during the wet season.

The DA noted that, despite these achievements, the rice industry still continues to face challenges such as typhoons, climate phenomena like El Niño and La Niña, and high input prices.

However, it stressed that the sector's long-term prospects remain promising, given the advancements in mechanization, alongside yield improvements and cost reductions.

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<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/25/philippines-rice-sector-sees-growth-under-rice-tariff-law>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

P49 maximum SRP on imported rice in March – DA

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

January 25, 2025 | 12:00am



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

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — Filipinos can expect the maximum suggested retail price (SRP) of imported rice to go down in the coming weeks, with the target of P49 per kilo eyed by March, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said yesterday, citing the continued drop in world prices of imported grains.

“By Feb. 5, the maximum SRP on imported rice will be brought down to P55. Then, by Feb. 15, we will lower it further to P52. By March 1, hopefully, we will break P50 per kilo, with the maximum SRP at P49, as long as world prices remain as they are today – a maximum landed cost of \$530 to \$550 per metric ton for five percent broken rice,” Tiu Laurel said following an inspection at the Cartimar Market in Pasay City.

The maximum SRP of P58 per kilo took effect on Jan. 20 as rice prices remain elevated despite the implementation of Executive Order No. 62 which lowered the tariff on imported rice to 15 percent from the previous 35 percent. President Marcos signed EO 62 in June 2024 and it took effect in July.

Tiu Laurel said that Japanese black rice, red rice, basmati, imported glutinous and locally produced rice are exempted from the MSRP.

The agriculture secretary further noted that while some stakeholders have called for a more immediate and substantial reduction, the government wants to avoid destabilizing the rice industry.

“That is the main reason why it has to be a drawdown. When we declared the maximum SRP at P58, a lot of people criticised me as someone living on another planet. But the truth is we have a plan. You cannot just shock the market... a lot of people will go out of business and many will resist our efforts, and that is what we are trying to avoid,” he explained.

Tiu Laurel said that by announcing the planned reductions of maximum SRP, the DA aims to give rice industry players – traders, retailers, wholesalers and importers – a window for an orderly transition.

He added that once the rice labeling guidelines are finalized by the DA and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), there would be a maximum SRP per type of rice.

Based on DA’s monitoring, the retail price of imported special rice was still sold as high as P61 per kilo; imported premium rice up to P58 per kilo; imported well milled rice as high as P52 per kilo and imported regular rice as much as P48 per kilo.

‘Not yet on sale’

Asked about the availability of NFA rice, Tiu Laurel said it will be sold nationwide as soon as a food security emergency is declared in the country.

He is still awaiting the approved resolution of the National Price Coordinating Council signed by a 10-member panel.

“Based on our projection, the guidelines (for the food security emergency) will be issued by the end of the month. It will take time for them to really look at it. The deliveries may start Feb. 7 to 15,” Tiu Laurel said.

He added that once a food security emergency is declared, the NFA can sell their stocks to the LGUs at P36 per kilo and the local executives can sell the rice at P38 per kilo.

“We cannot give (NFA rice) to all municipalities or LGUs. The technique is for us to entail minimal cost. LGUs where the stocks are located would be given the allocation. We need to flush out our stocks, about 300,000 tons,” Tiu Laurel declared.

The DA hopes to begin the availability of the affordable rice in supermarkets and convenience stores by Feb. 15. This will include the P29 per kilo rice for vulnerable sectors; the P38 and P45 per kilo for 25 percent and five percent broken rice under the Rice-for-All program and the P36 per kilo “sulit rice,” which can be bought in over 3,200 retail outlets of SM, Robinsons, 7-Eleven, Puregold and MerryMart.

High vegetable prices

Aside from rice, the government should address the persistently high prices of vegetables and other daily staples, Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian urged.

“The government must also provide ample support to farmers to boost production, lower costs and increase the supply of agricultural goods. We can meet the high price of goods for the sake of our consumers if our farmers have enough harvest and production,” he said.

During an inspection at the Pasay City public market yesterday, Tiu Laurel identified possible smuggled vegetables, with onion sticks, Chinese yam, large broccoli and peppers still wrapped in packaging with Chinese characters.

He noted that the questionable farm products lacked sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs), making them unverified and possibly unsafe for consumers.

“I don’t recall the Bureau of Plant Industry issuing SPSICs for these vegetables. This strongly indicates smuggling,” Tiu Laurel said.

He ordered the DTI and related agencies to investigate and, if necessary, pursue legal action against those responsible.

Meanwhile, the retail price of pork has also spiked within the last two weeks, with pork belly sold as high as P480 per kilo and pork shoulder up to P400 per kilo, the DA’s monitoring revealed. Tiu Laurel said he is studying the possibility of imposing a maximum SRP on pork.

“During our inspection, the farmgate price was only P220, P240 (per kilo) so there seems to be a similar problem just like rice. We are already computing the value chain like we did (with) rice to see how we can temper the price,” he noted.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/25/2416669/p49-maximum-srp-imported-rice-march-da>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Finger-pointing over blank budget items continues

[Jose Rodel Clapano](#), [Marc Jayson Cayabyab](#) - The Philippine Star

January 25, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The executive branch cannot be held liable for the supposed blank items in the bicameral conference committee report of Congress on the then proposed 2025 national budget that critics want to question before the Supreme Court, Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin said yesterday.

At a press conference, Bersamin said Malacañang would not get in the way of those who would like to challenge the legality of the P6.326-trillion General Appropriations Act (GAA), particularly former president Rodrigo Duterte's ally, Davao City Rep. Isidro Ungab.

"I cannot stop Congressman Ungab and those similarly minded people from putting up a challenge. Our problem with that is, we are not the ones responsible if there are lapses on that aspect because that is a bicam report," Bersamin said after attending a budget forum at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City.

"We have nothing to do with the bicam report. All we are concerned about is the finished product which was signed by the President, not the blank check," the executive secretary said.

A bicameral conference committee report reconciles the differences in the measure prepared separately by the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Ungab was questioning what he called the "discrepancies" in the bicameral conference committee report on this year's budget, particularly the supposed blank amounts for items under the agriculture department and unprogrammed appropriations.

The lawmaker earlier said considering that the 2025 GAA had already been signed by the President, there is no other recourse for its critics than go to the high court.

Marcos signed the P6.326-trillion GAA for 2025 on Dec. 30 last year. This year's budget was 9.7 percent higher than the previous year's allocation. The President vetoed over P194 billion worth of projects, which he claimed are inconsistent with the administration's priority programs.

"Let's remove from our consciousness that we have anything to do with the blank pages you were talking about. That is why we resented so much that impression that the President was given a blank check, wala kaming kinalaman (we have nothing to do with it) – it's internal to Congress," Bersamin said.

Marcos earlier accused Duterte of lying about supposed missing amounts in the 2025 budget. Bersamin had also branded Duterte's claims as "fake news."

In a recent statement, the Department of Budget and Management said what had been presented by "certain misinformed individuals" were pages from the bicameral conference committee report and not the General Appropriations Bill (GAB) or the GAA.

“It is important to note that, under the 1987 Constitution, it is the Bill – the GAB and NOT the Bicam Report, that is officially submitted for the consideration and approval or veto of the President,” the DBM said.

Asked what could be the implication of the looming legal challenges to the implementation of this year’s budget, Bersamin said, “nothing.”

SC TRO unlikely

Bersamin, a former chief justice, said the SC is unlikely to stop the implementation of the budget even if any of the petitioners would ask for a temporary restraining order “because the government function must be run.”

“I cannot understand if the Supreme Court will have that tendency to put a stop to it even if any of those challengers will ask for a TRO because the government function must be run,” he said.

“Now, they will say, fall back on the re-enacted budget, but the re-enacted budget can come only when there is a finding that it has been vetoed or the Supreme Court has nullified the present budget. But that is yet to be in the end of the year or maybe when the resolution of these challenges will have been delivered,” the executive secretary said.

Bersamin said it’s the task of the President to ensure proper implementation of the 2025 national budget.

As part of this, the DBM hosted a budget forum at the PICC, attended by heads of agencies.

“The President is really in earnest in seeing the proper implementation of the budget – the surviving parts of the budget,” Bersamin said.

Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman said the President has reviewed the outlay of 50 percent of agencies, adding that so far, P30 billion would be needed to finance programs that did not receive funding.

Earlier describing the 2025 national budget as “suboptimal,” Marcos assured key government agencies of funding restoration for vital programs that sustained budget cuts.

But Pangandaman maintained the executive branch cannot restore projects and programs that were not included in the GAA amid criticisms on the supposed “modifications” being done by the administration on the budget.

Only in bicam report

For Senate finance committee chairperson Grace Poe, the public should refer to the GAB, or the enrolled copy signed into law by Marcos, and not to the report of the bicameral conference committee where the supposed blank items had been spotted.

It was in the bicameral report where blank items were seen in projects involving irrigation, agricultural equipment, fertilizers, seeds, fisheries and crops.

“The enrolled bill is the most important. There were no blanks there. All the totals have already been verified,” Poe said in a GMA News report Thursday night.

Poe echoed the statement of Senate President Francis Escudero that the 2025 national budget amounting to P6.326 trillion would not have been approved had there been discrepancies.

“Senate President Chiz was correct in his statement, which should really be referenced,” she said, referring to the Senate president by his nickname. “In fact, the President has also not seen blanks in our enrolled bill.”

Poe said there was a technical working group tasked to consolidate the House and Senate versions of the budget.

“When we completed the bicam report and we submitted it as an enrolled bill, it was complete,” Poe said.

“It is wrong to accuse Congress of issuing blank checks. That is a lie. It is not true. The funds could not be released if there were blanks in the GAA,” Escudero said at a press briefing on Wednesday.

Cagayan de Oro Rep. Rufus Rodriguez said he agreed with Bersamin that the executive branch cannot be held liable for the blank items in the bicameral conference committee report on the 2025 budget.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/25/2416692/finger-pointing-over-blank-budget-items-continues>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA forms TWG for food security emergency

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

January 25, 2025 | 12:00am



A customer buys tomatoes priced at P280 per kilo at Marikina Public Market on January 7, 2025.

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) has formed a technical working group (TWG) to formulate the implementing rules for the release of National Food Authority (NFA) rice stocks once the government officially declares a food security emergency on the staple.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. issued Special Order (SO) 139 that ordered the creation of the TWG that would formulate the implementing guidelines of Section 6 of Republic Act 12078.

The provision concerns the powers of the DA on rice price stabilization and supply regulation that empowers the agriculture secretary to declare a food security emergency on rice upon the recommendation of the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC).

Under the law, the declaration of the emergency situation must be due to a supply shortage or an extraordinary increase in rice prices.

“To ensure the effective implementation of Section 6 of RA 12078, a TWG is hereby created and constituted to draft the implementing guidelines,” Tiu Laurel said.

Under a food security emergency situation, the NFA will be allowed to sell its existing rice buffer stock in specified areas to influence prevailing market prices.

The TWG will be chaired by Agriculture Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and Regulations Asis Perez and co-chaired by Agriculture Undersecretary for Rice Industry Development Christopher Morales. NFA administrator Larry Lacson will serve as the TWG's vice chairperson.

The members of the TWG will come from the different units of the DA such as policy research service, agribusiness and marketing assistance service, national rice program, legal service, office of the secretary and the Philippine Rice Research Institute.

Aside from crafting the implementing guidelines of Section 6, the TWG will also develop the parameters and formula for determining a rice supply shortage or an extraordinary increase in rice prices.

The TWG will also coordinate with the NPCC to ensure inter-agency alignment while also facilitating consultations with relevant stakeholders to gather insights and recommendation in the drafting of the implementing guidelines.

Lastly, the TWG must perform other relevant tasks that may arise in connection with the preparation of the implementing guidelines.

The SO also created a secretariat that will provide technical and administrative support to the TWG including preparation of reports, organization of meetings and documentation of activities.

The declaration of the food security emergency is seen by the DA as a way to not just pull down prevailing retail rice prices but also relieve the NFA's warehouses and thereby, enable the grains agency to procure palay in the upcoming dry season harvest.

Last week, the NPCC approved in principle the recommendation to the DA to declare a food security emergency on rice. However, the NPCC is still completing the signatures needed to issue a formal recommendation.

The DA is still awaiting the formal recommendation from the NPCC to be able to declare the food security emergency.

Nonetheless, Tiu Laurel said he still sees the declaration made by Feb. 1, which would give enough time for the NFA to release its stocks before they start aging. The NFA estimates that the number of its aging rice stocks would reach 700,000 50-kilogram bags by next month.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/01/25/2416607/da-forms-twg-food-security-emergency>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Bureaucratese



FIRST PERSON - Alex Magno - The Philippine Star

January 25, 2025 | 12:00am

When accurate communication could prove ruinous, bureaucrats often resort to confusing euphemisms to smooth the harshness of truth. The strange language they use is called “bureaucratese.”

For instance, Congress presented the administration a badly mangled budget for 2025. That budget, now burdened with revelations about our legislators signing blank pages and likely facing questions of constitutionality, was duly signed by President Marcos before the year ended.

Now, the administration is describing the national budget as “suboptimal.” That might be a better term than simply calling it a “total mess” put together by completely cavalier legislators.

To correct the “suboptimal” budget, the President’s men are now trying to reallocate money to fund programs abandoned by Congress. This could precipitate a second tier of constitutionality cases covering the allocation of unallocated funds.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) now adds to the thick bureaucratese spilling out from this administration.

No one really understood what “Suggested Retail Price” (SRP) is. On one hand, it is not really price control which runs against the function of a free market. But it surely is a blunt instrument for coercing small retailers to conform with government’s idea of what the prices of things should be.

Now the DA introduces the notion of a “Maximum Suggested Retail Price” (MSRP) to set an upper limit for how much rice could be sold. How this could even be enforceable is a mystery. Should government crack down hard on poor retailers selling above MSRP, the effort will only force the rice trade underground. The staple will be sold much like illegal drugs or illicit tobacco products are – at wildly uncontrolled prices.

For many days now, the DA has been threatening to declare a rice “emergency.” After some decoding of bureaucratese, it turns out that what this means is to authorize the release of NFA rice stocks to flood the market and force down prices – at great loss to government, of course.

The declaration of an “emergency” is stalled because of a minor problem. The NFA is mandated to maintain buffer stocks of the politically sensitive food staple. After it sells down its current stock, how will it replenish?

Armed with stronger measures against “agricultural economic sabotage,” government has been raiding warehouses and confiscating rice stocks arbitrarily considered as “hoarded.” To manage their own business risks, rice traders have reduced the rice stocks they keep – making all of us vulnerable in the event of a calamity.

After the NFA sells down its current stock, where will it buy rice to replace the buffer stock? Certainly not from the depleted commercial warehouses. No one seems to have a viable answer to that question.

Boon

In many ways, Abra is like the Samar provinces. The terrain is rough and the soil is highly mineralized. Agriculture will not be the way to prosperity.

In the Samar provinces, militant bishops have managed to hinder the growth of mining – the only way to bring prosperity to the land. In Abra and nearby provinces, investments in mining promise a way out of misery.

Mining, as we know, elevated Baguio to the prosperous city it now is. Abra could now aspire for that, with its breathtaking landscape and rich cultural heritage. Exploration confirmed the province holds great mineral wealth.

A mining venture, Yamang Mineral Corporation (YMC), is now in the late stages of commencing mining activities in the province. YMC is a subsidiary of UK-based Metals Exploration Plc (MEP). This is the same company that owns FCF Minerals Corporation (FCF), operating the highly successful Runruno Gold-Molybdenum Project in Nueva Viscaya.

Since commencing operations in 2017, the Runruno operation has contributed over P5.71 billion in taxes and duties. These help fuel national and local development initiatives. About 79 percent of this project’s 1,145-strong workforce are locals. It has created meaningful employment, uplifting the communities around the project site.

In addition to creating jobs and generating revenues, FCF’s social development and management program has invested over P543.37 million in community initiatives. These initiatives range from scholarships for indigenous students to vital infrastructure such as farm-to-market roads. Abra will benefit from the same transformative programs when commercial activities begin at the YMC site.

The Philippines has among the world’s toughest mining laws that require environmental remediation and community benefits. The Runruno project, using pioneering eco-friendly technologies, has been recognized for its adherence to our mining laws. It has won its third consecutive Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Award for Surface Mining Operations. The company likewise received recognition from the ASEAN Mineral Awards.

The investors commit to making the YMC project in Abra as exemplary.

MEP president Darren Bowden marvels at the mineral deposits of Abra. The province, he observes “holds immense potential for responsible and sustainable mineral development.”

Abra, it turns out, has one of the world’s largest critical mineral reserves. The investors believe the province could position as a pivotal player in the global minerals market. With all the environmental

regulations governing mining in this country, the investment could evolve a sustainable model where the environment, the economy and the communities thrive together.

Abra's leaders and its people must be empowered to ensure sustainability and environmental standards are constantly observed. The province's rich natural heritage need not be lost even as its economic potential is unlocked.

This should be good news for a province that once seemed condemned to the backwaters of our economic mainstream.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2025/01/25/2416631/bureaucratese>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA wants to gradually lower MSRP of imported rice to P49 by March

By: [Charie Abarca](#) - Reporter / [@charieabarcaINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 04:10 PM January 24, 2025



Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.
—DA FB PAGE PHOTO

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) wants to gradually lower the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice in the coming weeks, eyeing to slide it down to P49 per kilo by March.

According to DA chief Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., the agency initially set the MSRP at P58 a kilo for prices of imported rice to reflect the decline in world prices.

“By February 5, the MSRP on imported rice will be brought down to P55. Then, by February 15, we will lower it further to P52. By March 1, hopefully, we will break P50 per kilo, with the MSRP at P49, as long as world prices remain as they are today—a maximum landed cost of USD530 to USD550 per metric ton for 5 percent broken rice,” said Tiu Laurel.

Despite calls for an “immediate and substantial reduction,” Tiu Laurel emphasized that the government wants to avoid “destabilizing” the rice industry.

“When we declared the MSRP at P58, a lot of people have criticized me as someone living in another planet. But the truth is we have a plan. You cannot just shock the market... a lot of people will go out of business, and many will resist our efforts, and that is what we are trying to avoid,” he explained.

One of the priorities of the DA is to give rice industry players — this includes traders, retailers, wholesalers, and importers — a window for an orderly transition.

“This would allow them to liquidate higher-priced stocks and renegotiate contracts with suppliers,” said Tiu Laurel.

He added that MSRP per rice type will also be issued once the rice labeling guidelines, which [the DA is currently working out with the Department of Trade and Industry](#), are finalized.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2027909/da-wants-to-gradually-lower-msrp-of-imported-rice-to-p49-by-march>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Career official is new BFAR chief

By: [Kurt Dela Peña](#) - Content Researcher Writer / [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 09:21 PM January 24, 2025



Newly appointed BFAR chief Elizer S. Salilig taking his oath of office. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MANILA, Philippines—President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. appointed a career official with a 34-year experience in fisheries management as the new national director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

Elizer Salilig, who was the regional director of BFAR’s office in Mimaropa since 2016, was made the head of the office on Jan. 15 and took office before Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel on Friday, Jan. 24.

Salilig, who started as a fishery technician for the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Soccsksargen, said he will ensure the efficient implementation of BFAR’s programs.

He stressed that he will work “with a steadfast commitment to advancing food security and supporting our fisherfolk,” while pointing out the need to “strengthen the aquaculture industry.”

Salilig, who led initiatives such as the one that produced millions of fingerlings a week, said amid the challenges posed by climate change, he is determined to focus on transitioning toward sustainable fisheries practices.”

But to achieve this, he stressed that “we will actively collaborate with other government agencies and academic institutions to enhance research and development efforts.”

Salilig’s appointment is widely viewed as a step toward restoring trust and stability in the agency tasked with overseeing the state’s fisheries sector, especially amid the issue on vessel monitoring system that confronted top BFAR and DA executives.

“Ultimately, my goal is to lead the agency in fulfilling its mission to ensure fish sufficiency, improve the quality of life of our fisherfolk, and align with the President’s vision of boosting productivity and yields, thereby uplifting their standard of living,” he stressed.

Salilig is expected to lead BFAR toward sustainable growth and provide stronger support for the fisheries sector, which plays a vital role in food security and the economy.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2027958/career-official-is-new-bfar-chief>

REMATE:

DA chief: Wala pang rekomendasyon sa food security emergency

January 24, 2025 17:59



MANILA, Philippines – Sinabi ni Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel nitong Biyernes, Enero 24 na hindi pa nito natatangap ang opisyal na rekomendasyon sa pagdedeklara ng food security emergency.

”Well, the NPCC (National Price Coordinating Council) has finalized the draft noong Tuesday pa lang, and the document is now umiikot for signature. So, na-delay nga. I was expecting it this week. So, malamang next week, makukuha ko na iyong signed document on the official recommendation for the declaration of rice emergency,” ani Tiu Laurel sa isang press briefing.

Sa ilalim ng Republic Act 12078, o batas na nag-aamyenda sa Agricultural Tariffication Act, ang Agriculture chief ay may kapangyarihan na magdeklara ng food security emergency sa bigas dahil sa shortage ng suplay nito o napakataas na presyo.

Kamakailan ay inaprubahan ng National Price Coordinating Council ang resolusyon na humihimok sa DA na magdeklara ng “food security emergency for rice” dahil sa nananatiling mataas na presyo nito.

Sa oras na maaprubahan, ang pamahalaan ay magbebenta ng 300,000 tonelada ng bigas pagsapit ng Pebrero. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/da-chief-wala-pang-rekomendasyon-sa-food-security-emergency/>

ABANTE:

Agri chief windang sa taas-presyo ng pork

Abante News

• January 24, 2025



Iniiimbestigahan ngayon ng Department of Agriculture ang posibleng profiteering ng mga negosyante dahil sa pagsirit ng presyo ng pork o karneng baboy sa mga palengke.

Ayon kay Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., tila may kahalintulad na problema sa bigas ang presyo ng mga karneng baboy at ipinasilip na niya ito.

“So, there seems to be a similar problem sa rice. But of course, it’s already, we’re already computing the value chain as we did with rice and to see kung paano mate-temper ito,” ani Laurel.

Dalawang linggo na umanong binabantayan ng DA ang presyuhan ng karneng baboy sa mga palengke.

Base sa monitoring ng DA noong Enero 22, Miyerkoles, naglalaro ang presyo ng pork belly sa Metro Manila mula P360 hanggang P480 per kilo habang nasa P340 hanggang P400 per kilo naman ang pork ham o kasim.

Mas mataas umano ang presyo ng mga nabanggit na produkto ng karneng baboy kumpara sa frozen pork na nasa P270 hanggang P350 per kilo habang P230 hanggang P280 per kilo naman ang frozen liempo.

Mababa rin aniya ang farm gate price ng local pork na nasa P220 hanggang P240 per kilo ang presyuhan.

(PNA)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/01/24/agri-chief-windang-sa-taas-presyo-ng-pork/>

MANILA STANDARD:

Authorities seize P1m in illegal fishing gear

By Manila Standard

January 25, 2025, 11:20 pm

Joint law enforcement authorities seized P1 million worth of illegal fishing equipment and arrested three suspects in the waters off Gasan, Marinduque on January 24.

The operation, coordinated by the Coast Guard Sub-Station Gasan and the Philippine National Police Maritime Police Station (MARPSTA) of Gasan, targeted illegal fishing activities in the municipal waters. The suspects were apprehended aboard the fishing banca Princess Aquarius, which was found to be engaged in unauthorized fishing.

During the operation, authorities confiscated key equipment, including a fishing banca valued at P500,000 a diesel engine worth P200,000, and fishing nets valued at P300,000.

The arrested individuals, all residents of Brgy. Daykitin, Buenavista, Marinduque, were found in violation of Section 6B of Republic Act No. 10654 (An Act to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing).

https://manilastandard.net/news/314550733/authorities-seize-p1m-in-illegal-fishing-gear.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawIDvCBleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHXEAzT1cep8ldEzR2D-rDh_WKsTnceyttung6TTgVnOx3OLNaJU7naPf7w_aem_ZZ9KHTVTH0t94Xt_PMTSJg