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MANILA BULLETIN:

DA invests P3 billion to build cold storage facilities nationwide

BY [MANILA BULLETIN](#)

Jan 27, 2025 06:02 AM

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said it will build 99 cold storage facilities starting this year to extend the shelf life of fruits, vegetables, and high-value crops, ensuring supply and price stability.

In a statement, Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. said the facilities will be powered by renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, ensuring efficient and environmentally friendly operations.

Laurel Jr. said the refrigerated warehouses are also hybrid infrastructures that could be powered by electricity from renewable energy sources and those supplied through the grid.

“This approach not only addresses immediate agricultural needs but also aligns with broader environmental goals,” Tiu Laurel said.

The DA has allocated P3 billion for the project to reduce farmers' losses and boost food security. Most of the small facilities are expected to start operating this year.

“By improving the cold chain infrastructure, we will strengthen the agricultural sector, reduce farm losses, extend the shelf life of agricultural products, stabilize supply and prices, and ensure food security,” he added.

The project is part of a comprehensive logistics master plan designed by the DA through the Agriculture and Fisheries Logistics Office (AFLO) headed by Agriculture Assistant Secretary for Logistics, Daniel Alfonso Atayde.

The plan encompasses not only cold storage facilities but also the development of a robust road network, agricultural seaports, and an integrated cold chain network to streamline the distribution of agricultural products throughout the country.

President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. has approved the use of P1.5 billion in unprogrammed funds in 2024 to kick-start the development of the cold storage network, with another P1.5 billion included in the 2025 General Appropriations Act.

The unprogrammed funds will be used to build around 65 small or modular chiller-type cold storage facilities nationwide and a large cold storage facility in Camarines Sur.

Two additional large facilities are planned, one possibly in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, and another in Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija, along with around 31 modular units across the country.

These investments will collectively enhance the country’s capacity for preserving perishable goods, ultimately benefiting both farmers and consumers. Construction of the large storage facilities is expected to take around 18-22 months after awarding the contract.

Each facility will have a capacity of 2,800 to 3,500 pallet positions, depending on the products. The DA will oversee and manage these mega-cold storage facilities in cooperation with local government units, farmers' cooperatives, and associations to ensure efficient operations and community involvement.

The modular refrigerated warehouses, on the other hand, are roughly the size of a 40-foot container van. They will have a capacity of seven to 15 metric tons, depending on the agricultural products to be stored.

These warehouses are expected to be operational within three months of construction, allowing for a swift enhancement of cold storage capabilities nationwide.

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<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/27/da-invests-p3-billion-to-build-cold-storage-facilities-nationwide>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Gov't launches new system to combat smuggling, increase revenue

BY [DERCO ROSAL](#)

Jan 27, 2025 05:31 AM

FOR MONDAY

To combat rampant smuggling, the government will soon implement a new digital trade protection system designed to significantly reduce illicit trade.

Department of Finance-led (DOF) committee on pre-border technical verification and cross-border electronic invoicing (CPTVCEI) recently issued a Joint Administrative Order (JAO) implementing AO No. 23, series of 2024, or the Digital and Integrated System for Pre-border Technical Verification and Cross-border Electronic Invoicing. This new system will enforce strict rules that importers must comply with before their goods reach Philippine borders. Following the recently issued administrative order, Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto said all involved agencies can now start collaborating to enhance border protection through digitalization.

“This will certainly go a long way in putting an end to smuggling, misdeclaration, and undervaluation. This will not only ensure that our consumers are protected from counterfeit and substandard goods, but also help us collect much-needed revenues for our people,” Recto stressed.

Latest data from the Bureau of Customs (BOC) showed that a total of 1,572 smuggled goods, amounting to P84.36 billion, were seized last year. With this, Recto assured that the government “will ensure the smooth and swift implementation of AO 23.” According to the DOF, the administrative order “simplifies customs procedures and expedites the inspection of all imported goods in the Philippines,” resulting in stronger border security and protection for consumers against substandard products.

DOF likewise said that the initiative emphasizes the “importance of ensuring imported goods comply with Philippine safety and quality standards, promoting transparency through a single electronic invoicing system, and enhancing inter-agency coordination for effective trade monitoring. It also noted that the directive aligns with the administration’s 8-Point Socioeconomic Agenda of enhancing bureaucratic efficiency “by streamlining government processes and ensuring transparency in public service delivery.”

Members of the CPTVCEI include the Bureau of Customs (BOC), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Energy (DOE), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA).

Representatives from the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industry Organization of the Philippines (CPIOPI) are also part of the CPTVCEI.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/27/gov-t-launches-new-system-to-combat-smuggling-increase-revenue>

MANILA BULLETIN:

JICA urges more high-value agri investments in Philippines

BY [BEN ARNOLD DE VERA](#)

Jan 27, 2025 05:30 AM

FOR MONDAY

Japan's aid arm is urging more job-generating and value-adding investments in the Philippines' agriculture sector so the domestic vegetable industry can meet the country's food security needs while also tapping into a wealth of business opportunities.

Takema Sakamoto, chief representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in the Philippines, pointed out last Friday, Jan. 24, that while "agriculture is the backbone of the country," the sector's employment and contribution to economic output are lagging behind.

"The share of employees in the agriculture sector accounts for about 24 percent, meaning that one in four employees in the entire Philippines is engaged in agriculture. Agriculture, thus, plays an important role in terms of employment, too. On the other hand, looking at the share to GDP [gross domestic product], the agriculture sector's GDP contribution remains only at about nine percent, which is much lower than the percentage of employment," Sakamoto noted in his speech at the Second Stakeholders Forum for Food Value Chain Platform, under the Department of Agriculture (DA) and JICA's six-year joint technical cooperation project for Market-Driven Enhancement of Vegetable Value Chain in the Philippines (MV2C)—or "Ka-Gulay"—held in Manila.

"While the poverty rate in the entire Philippines is about 18 percent, the poverty rate in the agriculture sector is as high as about 30 percent. These data clearly highlight the huge gap for improvement and indicate a strong need for further modernization and development in the agriculture sector, and for further income generation for farmers," he added.

Sakamoto also lamented the declining share of agriculture in the country's total employment, from as high as 33 percent back in 2010, which he attributed to concerns that agribusiness ventures are "not very profitable," thus deterring younger Filipinos from taking on jobs or investing in this sector.

The JICA Philippines official stressed that encouraging young Filipinos to participate in agriculture would take advantage of the so-called demographic sweet spot that the country enjoys—"a prominent strength of the Philippines, as [it] shows the future potential."

"Sufficient job creation is a critical challenge for the Philippines, as a future where jobs are not secured enough means social instability and economic stagnation... Overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and business process outsourcing (BPO) are often mentioned as growth sectors in the Philippines; however, their employment absorption capacity may not necessarily be large enough, especially considering the future impact of AI [artificial intelligence] advancement," he said.

To boost domestic agriculture, Sakamoto urged increasing farmers' incomes by producing highly profitable crops, responding to the rising health consciousness among Filipinos, minimizing post-harvest losses, as well as improving production, transportation efficiency, and the agro-industry. "We are confident that such

efforts to attract more farmers are essential to move towards a more sustainable and prosperous Philippines."

Sakamoto is hopeful that the MV2C project, which began in 2022, will not only develop innovative and modern inclusive food value chain models, but also replicate best practices among stakeholders across the country.

"In discussions of food security, farmers' income increase, and job creation in the Philippines, there might be a tendency to focus too much on the agricultural production side. However, there is an acute need to streamline, improve, and modernize every stage or node of the value chain—from agricultural production [and] logistics, to marketing to consumers—to ensure better food supply at an affordable price to consumers," according to Sakamoto.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/27/jica-urges-more-high-value-agri-investments-in-ph>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA to build P3 billion cold storage facilities for fruits, vegetables

[Christine Boton](#) - The Philippine Star

January 27, 2025 | 12:00am



Vendors arrange and water the vegetables they sell while waiting for customers at their stalls at the corner of Luzon and Commonwealth Avenues in Quezon City on July 14, 2024.

STAR / Miguel De Guzman

MANILA, Philippines — Department of Agriculture (DA) is set to roll out a P3-billion initiative to construct 99 cold storage facilities nationwide, aiming to extend the shelf life of fruits, vegetables and high-value crops, while ensuring price stability and food security.

In a statement, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the facilities would feature sustainable, cost-efficient designs powered by renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, alongside electricity from the grid.

“This approach not only addresses immediate agricultural needs, but also aligns with broader environmental goals,” Tiu Laurel said.

The project, a cornerstone of the DA’s logistics master plan, aims to strengthen the agricultural supply chain by reducing post-harvest losses and improving the distribution of goods.

The plan, spearheaded by the Agriculture and Fisheries Logistics Office under Assistant Secretary Daniel Alfonso Atayde, includes cold storage facilities, road networks, agricultural seaports and an integrated cold chain system.

President Marcos has approved the use of P1.5 billion in unprogrammed funds for 2024 to initiate the project, while another P1.5 billion is allocated in the 2025 General Appropriations Act.

“The unprogrammed funds will be spent to build around 65 small or modular chiller-type cold storage facilities across the country and a large cold storage facility to be built in Camarines Sur,” Tiu Laurel said.

Additional plans include two large facilities, potentially in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro and Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija, as well as 31 smaller modular units.

Each large facility, designed to store 2,800 to 3,500 pallet positions, will take 18 to 22 months to complete, with operations managed by the DA in coordination with local government units and farmers’ cooperatives.

The modular units, akin to 40-foot container vans with 7 to 15 metric tons capacity depending on the agricultural products to be stored, will be operational within three months, offering a quicker solution for immediate storage needs nationwide.

The DA further noted that the investment in cold chain infrastructure aims to stabilize supply and prices, and enhance returns for farmers and fisherfolk which will benefit both producers and consumers to a sustainable agricultural economy.

“The budget allocation for cold storage in 2025 is a strategic approach towards bolstering this critical aspect of the agricultural sector,” Atayde said.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/27/2417134/da-build-p3-billion-cold-storage-facilities-fruits-vegetables>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Industry groups warn vs higher beverage, food costs

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:10 AM January 27, 2025

Major industry groups have urged the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) to reconsider its new order requiring permits and fees for importing sugar alternatives, warning that the new policy could disrupt trade and jack up consumer prices.

In separate letters to SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona, the Food Industry Asia (FIA) and the International Council of Beverages Associations (ICBA) urged the sugar regulator to suspend the implementation of Sugar Order No. 6 until an “inclusive” and “proper” consultation with stakeholders is conducted.

The Joint Foreign Chambers of the Philippines (JFC) and the Beverage Industry Association of the Philippines called on the government to address the broader implications of the SRA order and notify the World Trade Organization (WTO) about the new rules.

Azcona confirmed receiving these letters, copies of which were obtained by the Inquirer, and said the SRA had reached out to them to discuss the issue, claiming that their concerns were “unfounded.”

“Their fears are unfounded as these are all speculative at the moment and we welcome the opportunity to sit with them and find solutions to their concerns,” Azcona told the Inquirer in a Viber message.

To recall, the SRA issued SO No. 6 in response to sugar industry stakeholders’ “grave concern” over the alleged unregulated importation of certain “sugars” and “sweeteners” into the country.

The SRA repeatedly said the SO was intended for monitoring and generating accurate data on the inbound volume of other types of sugar.

The industry groups, however, pointed out that the SRA can just use existing data from concerned government agencies such as the Bureau of Customs instead of imposing additional fees and documentation requirements.

But for Azcona, the additional requirements “will provide SRA and the DA the accurate data we need that will enable us to effectively plan supply and demand, and ensure that we effectively serve our local farmers and the more than five million Filipinos dependent on the sugar industry.”

While the FIA, a group representing the food and beverage (F&B) sector across Asia, understands the rationale behind the sugar order, it said this may pose challenges such as delays in shipment processing, increased operational costs and logistical bottlenecks.

“These challenges, if not carefully managed, could create unnecessary burdens for businesses while indirectly impacting consumers,” FIA CEO Matt Kovac said in the letter.

The ICBA, an international non-governmental organization comprised of national and regional beverage associations as well as international beverage companies, flagged the lack of consultation on the directive and its scope which included products not considered as sugar substitutes.

SO No. 6 would cause not only a regulatory burden but also “shipment delays and higher costs for businesses, ultimately leading to higher prices for beverages for consumers,” said Geoff Parker, executive director of ICBA’s Asia Pacific Regional Group.

The JFC, a coalition of American, Canadian, European, Japanese and Korean business chambers and the Philippine Association of Multinational Companies Regional Headquarters Inc., raised similar apprehensions that such an order will undermine the Philippines’ competitiveness as a trade and investment destination.

“We are also concerned with what seems to be quite a stretch from SRA’s mandate by including – as part of the coverage of these added fees and procedures – finished goods/confectionary items such as white chocolate and candies,” the coalition said.

Meanwhile, the BIAP, an association of 12 of the country's largest manufacturers of commercially available beverages, argued that the SO contravenes the principles of the Anti-Red Tape Act since it may cause delays in shipment releases and port congestion, among others.

“In addition, we would like to ask clarity from the SRA on the coverage of items such as confectionery under this order, which are considered finished goods and not used as ingredients or sugar replacements,” BIAP Corporate Secretary Lloyd Ian Zaragoza said.

On shipment issues, Azcona said they have not received any complaints about delays or effects on ease of doing business since the SRA began issuing import clearances to fructose in 2017.

“As for the possible delays they are concerned about, SRA processes more than a thousand clearances a year and processing time is 2 to 3 working days from submission of documents and payment of the fee,” he explained.

“Normal shipments take about 15 days, so their fear is unfounded as they have ample time to apply for a clearance,” he added.

To further ease the application process, Azcona said the SRA plans to develop an online portal “asap (as soon as possible)” for processing and evaluating applications.

On the additional cost, the SRA head said the processing fee was “a miniscule amount” as opposed to other types of sugar as they only need to pay P0.06 per kilogram.

<https://business.inquirer.net/503326/industry-groups-warn-vs-higher-beverage-food-costs>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Xanadu Agri seeking tie-ups to promote use of liquid fertilizer

January 27, 2025 | 12:04 am



[FACEBOOK.COM/XANADUPH](https://www.facebook.com/xanaduph)

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

XANADU Agriproducts, Inc. said that it is looking to partner with more government agencies and farmer cooperatives to promote its liquid fertilizer, saying that the product holds the potential to improve yields compare to traditional fertilizer.

“The primary goal right now is we’re investing all our efforts to just make the product available via trials through government agencies, local government units, and cooperatives for them to just experience the product in one planting cycle,” Xanadu Agriproducts Chairman and President Wellington C. Soong told *BusinessWorld*.

The company said that its liquid formulation ensures better absorption of nutrients.

“We want farmers to try the product for themselves and that’s where we invest. We provide them with the products. We work with them to follow the protocol and when they see the results of the harvest, then they will come back on their own,” he added.

To expand its market, the company has engaged UNAHCO, Inc., the animal nutrition and healthcare subsidiary of United Laboratories, Inc., as its national distributor.

UNAHCO has “about over 5,000 distributors nationwide so that becomes part of our network and footprint to bring the products to more farmers,” he said.

Mr. Soong said that the company conducts side-by-side trials against traditional fertilizers to demonstrate to farmers the product’s potential.

“When we achieve (improved yields) on a bigger scale and we have the critical mass, then that would be my legacy to Philippine agriculture, to contribute to our food crisis,” Mr. Soong said.

According to the company’s field trials, a rice farm in Oriental Mindoro achieved a yield of 7.75 metric tons (MT) per hectare, more than double the yield of the farm serving as the control, which did not use the fertilizer.

Corn trials were also conducted at a farm in Sultan Kudarat which achieved a yield of 6.73 MT per hectare against the 2.35 MT for the control.

“It’s really important because we are introducing a new technology. So we’re changing mindsets. It’s in a way, it’s one of our greatest challenges in terms of educating the grassroots,” Mr. Soong said.

The company claims its product is more biodegradable and environmentally friendly compared to traditional fertilizers.

“We use inorganic ingredients, but we are 100% eco-safe. With us it’s nutrients and water so (its) biodegradable (and) non-toxic to even to small insects,” Xanadu Agriproducts Executive Director Hazel R. Loreto-Murphee said.

Traditional granular fertilizer has been observed to cause soil to degrade with excessive use, the company said.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/01/27/649026/xanadu-agri-seeking-tie-ups-to-promote-use-of-liquid-fertilizer/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Agricultural output may have contracted in 2024

January 27, 2025 | 12:33 am



A DRONE VIEW shows flooded farmlands following Super Typhoon Man-Yi in Quezon, Nueva Ecija Province, Nov. 18, 2024. — REUTERS

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

PHILIPPINE FARM OUTPUT likely contracted in 2024, reflecting the adverse impact of weather-related events such as El Niño and La Niña, analysts said.

Former Agriculture Undersecretary Fermin D. Adriano estimates that the value of agricultural output may have declined by more than 1% in 2024.

If realized, this would be a reversal of the 0.4% growth in the value of agricultural production in 2023 and miss the Department of Agriculture's (DA) 1-2% growth target for 2024.

"Of course, El Niño and La Niña adversely affected the sector," Mr. Adriano said in a Viber message.

The El Niño weather event, which began in June 2023, brought below-normal rainfall conditions, dry spells and droughts that affected overall harvest during the year.

The Philippines continued to experience below-normal rainfall conditions in the first half of the year. In the second half, the country experienced a series of storms that brought heavy rains and caused flooding.

“The year 2024 was full of challenges and issues. Overall, the agricultural output will be lower than 2023 due to natural calamities including El Niño and La Niña one after the other,” former Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar said in a text message.

Mr. Dar said the delayed distribution of inputs to farmers, as well as lack of technical assistance from local government units may have also contributed to the decline in agricultural production.

“With the series of typhoons and calamities in the fourth quarter, we can only expect output in the whole of 2024 to be lower than in 2023,” said Federation of Free Farmers National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor in a Viber message, citing El Niño and La Niña as factors that contributed to the drop in farm output.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) declared the end of the El Niño in June 2024 but dry spells persisted in some parts of the country.

According to the DA’s final El Niño bulletin, agricultural damage was tallied at P15.3 billion with total volume lost at 330,717 metric tons, spanning 109,481 hectares of farmland.

In the second half, La Niña conditions increased the likelihood of tropical cyclones, low-pressure areas, and the intensification of the southwest monsoon in the Philippines.

La Niña conditions are expected to persist until the end of the first quarter of 2025, according to PAGASA.

Hog production, in particular, saw a decline in production due to these weather disturbances.

“El Niño affected production because warmer temperatures caused pigs to pant and reduced significantly their feed intake causing slower growth and lower weights,”

National Federation of Hog Farmers, Inc. (NatFed) Vice-Chairman Alfred Ng said in a Viber message.

Mr. Ng said heavy rainfall also raised the likelihood of respiratory diseases among hogs, which would have led to higher treatment costs.

“Mortalities may also be an issue especially for poorly managed farms and facilities,” he added.

At the same time, Mr. Adriano said several animal diseases like the African Swine Fever (ASF) and the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza or bird flu, continue to affect the production in livestock and poultry sectors.

In the second half of 2024, the Philippines saw a resurgence in ASF cases which prompted the government to fast-track the roll out of vaccines for limited use.

Only the AVAC ASF Live vaccine from Vietnam has received approval for a limited government-controlled rollout. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a Certificate of Product Registration for AVAC, valid for two years and subject to annual review.

The recent outbreaks were blamed on the spread of contaminated water due to heavy rains, the DA said.

OUTLOOK

FOR

2025

Meanwhile, Mr. Montemayor said that farm production may likely rebound in 2025 due to low base effects.

“For 2025, you could say there is nowhere else to go but up given that we will be starting from a low base,” he said.

According to NatFed’s Mr. Ng, the DA and the FDA will soon allow the widespread use of the ASF vaccine which could help the hog industry’s recovery.

“If vaccine is successful for backyard raisers, then ASF virus load will go down and commercial farms with stronger biosecurity systems will also be protected. Then, the industry can bounce back as commercial farmers may be encouraged to come back,” he added.

The DA said earlier that the commercial use of the ASF vaccine could be allowed by February or March of this year.

The department also said that it is seeking to begin large-scale trials of a bird flu vaccine by March.

For Mr. Dar, the government must distribute agricultural inputs in a timely manner to help the sector boost production and income this year.

The Philippine Statistics Authority is set to release fourth-quarter and full-year data on farm output on Jan. 28 (Tuesday).

The agriculture sector contributes about a tenth of the country’s gross domestic product and provides around a quarter of all jobs.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2025/01/27/649060/agricultural-output-may-have-contracted-in-2024/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

P3 billion budgeted for cold storage network

January 27, 2025 | 12:03 am



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it has allocated P3 billion to establish a network of cold storage facilities at 99 locations this year.

“By improving the cold chain infrastructure, we will strengthen the agricultural sector, reduce farm losses, extend the shelf life of agricultural products, stabilize supply and prices, and ensure food security,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel ,Jr. said in a statement Sunday.

The DA said the 99 facilities will be small and most are due to launch operations this year.

Mr. Laurel added that the DA will use P1.5 billion in unprogrammed funds from 2024 to start the development of the cold storage network. The additional P1.5 billion was included in the DA’s budget for 2025.

“The unprogrammed funds will be spent to build around 65 small or modular chiller-type cold storage facilities across the country and a large cold storage facility in Camarines Sur,” he said.

The DA added that two large facilities are also in the pipeline with candidate sites identified in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro and in Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija.

“The budget allocation for cold storage in 2025 is a strategic approach towards bolstering this critical aspect of the agricultural sector,” Assistant Secretary for Logistics Daniel N. Atayde said.

The DA said that it will oversee and manage the large cold storage facilities in cooperation with local government units and farmers' cooperatives and associations.

On the other hand, the smaller modular facilities will only take about three months to be completed and will have capacities of 7-15 metric tons.

It added that the refrigerated warehouses could also run on renewable energy sources.

“This approach not only addresses immediate agricultural needs but also aligns with broader environmental goals,” Mr. Laurel said. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/01/27/649025/p3-billion-budgeted-for-cold-storage-network/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Indian sugar mills seek higher prices; export contracts remain elusive

January 27, 2025 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

MUMBAI — Indian traders are struggling to sign export contracts even after New Delhi allowed the export of 1 million metric tons as mills are seeking a hefty premium over London prices, which overseas buyers are unwilling to pay, four trade sources told Reuters.

The slower pace of shipments from India, the world's second biggest sugar producer, will support global prices, which this week fell to their lowest in three years.

India on Monday allowed exports of 1 million tons of sugar during the current season to September 2025 to help mills export surplus stocks and prop up local prices.

“After exports were allowed, local prices jumped nearly 10%. Mills are now seeking hefty premiums over global prices to export their allocated quotas,” according to a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trade house.

The Food Ministry has allocated mills a uniform export quota of 3.174% of their three-year average production, which they can export directly or via merchant exporters.

Traders this week contracted 20,000 tons of white and refined sugar for shipment in February between \$490 and \$510 per ton on a free-on-board (FOB) basis, or nearly \$10 to \$25 per ton above benchmark London futures, four dealers with trade houses said.

Before export approval, Indian prices were at a big discount to global prices, making exports profitable. However, post-approval, Indian prices surged while global prices declined, reducing the export incentive for mills, according to a New Delhi-based dealer with a trade house.

“Mills need to export their allocated quota before September 2025, so they are not in a hurry to sign deals. Instead, they are waiting for global prices to rise,” the dealer said.

India, which sells sugar to Indonesia, Bangladesh and the United Arab Emirates among others, was the world’s No. 2 exporter during the five years to 2022-23, with volumes averaging 6.8 million tons annually.

Sugar mills in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, which were allocated 274,184 tons of sugar for export, have sold around 100,000 tons of their quota to merchant exporters, dealers said.

These exporters will secure supplies from the coastal states of Maharashtra and neighboring Karnataka as less freight is required to move sugar from mills to ports in these two states. — **Reuters**

https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/01/27/649022/indian-sugar-mills-seek-higher-prices-export-contracts-remain-elusive/#google_vignette

BUSINESS WORLD:

Ivory Coast expects dire cocoa mid-crop as chocolate industry braces for rough year

January 27, 2025 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

IVORY COAST expects to record one of the worst mid-crop cocoa harvests of the last 15 years this season with production seen no higher than 300,000 metric tons (MT) compared with a yearly average of 500,000 tons, regulator and industry sources said.

A poor harvest could add upward pressure to cocoa prices, which are already around record highs after nearly tripling last year. Analysts have said the chocolate industry is in for a rough 2025 that could see shelf prices hiked by a teens percentage.

Ivory Coast is the world's top cocoa producer but a lack of rain and excessive heat since November across all of its 13 growing regions have stalled development of the mid-crop harvest, which is meant to start in April.

The unfavorable conditions mean that the first beans will only start to arrive in ports in June at the earliest, provided the weather improves and rains return in the coming weeks, the sources said.

“There is a consensus that current climatic conditions are so unfavorable that the mid-crop harvest will not exceed 300,000 tons. There is no sign of any production at all on almost any plantation in the country,” according to a pod counter who has visited Ivory Coast's farms.

Two regulators said that after touring farms they lowered the outlook for cocoa production to 300,000 metric tons from 400,000 tons.

“Like everyone else, we’re seeing the same thing. The mid-crop harvest will be one of the worst in 15 years,” one of the officials said.

He added that the regulator has issued only about 250,000 tons in export contracts to grinders, preferring to be cautious.

The regulators said the entire mid-crop harvest will be sold to local grinders to guarantee them the volumes necessary to maintain their activity.

A dozen planters and middlemen across the West African country described the situation as unprecedented, characterized by a total absence of flowers and small pods after those that appeared in December and January dried up in the high heat.

“Even if the rain comes today...it’s already too late,” said Paul Kouame Kouakou, who owns four hectares of cocoa in Duekoue, in the west of Ivory Coast.

It usually takes a flower around 22 weeks to become a mature pod. The farmer said while the harvest was expected to start in April, there will be no cocoa until at least June.

“Usually, it’s around November and December that we get the rains that herald the mid-crop harvest, but this year there’s been no rain so far, and February and March are the hottest months,” another pod counter said.

He visited dozens of plantations that did not have any sign of flowers or pods, which he called “very bad news” for the crop. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/01/27/649023/ivory-coast-expects-dire-cocoa-mid-crop-as-chocolate-industry-braces-for-rough-year/>

MANILA STANDARD:

Balanga gov't gives P1.3-m fertilizer rebates to farmers



By Butch Gunio

January 26, 2025, 11:10 pm

The Balanga City government under Mayor Francis Garcia and Vice Mayor Vianca Venzon-Gozon continues to support local farmers through various initiatives.

Recently, some P1.3 million worth of fertilizer discount vouchers were distributed to 299 Balanga farmers.

The initiative, conducted in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, aims to reduce the production costs and boost the agricultural productivity.

The program was part of the local government's continued efforts to uplift the way of life in the agriculture sector.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/314551058/balanga-govt-gives-p1-3-m-fertilizer-rebates-to-farmers.html>

THE MANILA TIMES:

DA allots P3 billion for cold-storage facilities

By Giselle P. Jordan

January 27, 2025

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is allocating P3 billion for 99 cold-storage facilities to extend the shelf life of fruits, vegetables and high-value crops, and assure continuous supply and price stability.

DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the provisions would have low operation costs and will run by electricity or solar and wind power, making them efficient, sustainable, and environment-friendly.

"This approach not only addresses immediate agricultural needs, but also aligns with broader environmental goals," Tiu Laurel noted.

The project is part of DA's comprehensive logistics master plan designed through its Agriculture and Fisheries Logistics Office (AFLO), led by Assistant Secretary for Logistics Daniel Alfonso Atayde.

Aside from cold-storage spaces, the plan includes the development of road networks, sea ports, and a cold-chain network to streamline distribution of agricultural products across the country.

Tiu Laurel said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has approved the use of P1.5 billion unprogrammed funds from 2024 for the development of the cold-storage network, while the DA added another P1.5 billion through the 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA).

The unprogrammed funds will be used to build 65 small or modular chiller-type cold-storage facilities across the country, and a large one to be built in Camarines Sur, Tiu Laurel noted.

There are plans to build two large facilities in San Jose (Occidental Mindoro) and Cabanatuan (Nueva Ecija), along with 31 modular units throughout the country.

Most of the smaller facilities will be operational this year.

Construction of large cold-storage facilities will take 18 to 22 months. Each will have 2,800 to 3,500 pallet capacity, depending on the products. These will be managed by the DA in coordination with local government units (LGUs) and farmers' cooperatives and associations (FCAs).

Modular refrigerated warehouses have sizes similar to 40-foot container vans, and will have a capacity of 7 to 15 metric tons, depending on the products. These are operational after three months of construction.

"The budget allocation for cold storage in 2025 is a strategic approach towards bolstering this critical aspect of the agricultural sector," Atayde said, noting that the facilities will reduce farm losses and increase farmer and fisherfolk income, and help with food security and price stability.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/27/business/top-business/da-allots-p3-billion-for-cold-storage-facilities/2044760>

THE MANILA TIMES:

FDA move to boost demand for coconuts

January 27, 2025

THE US Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) decision to remove coconut from a list of major food allergens will boost demand for coconut-based products and benefit Philippine coconut farmers and exporters, Department of Trade and Industry-Export Marketing Bureau (EMB) Director Bianca Pearl Sykimte said in a statement on Monday.

The Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act officially delisted coconut as a tree nut among major food allergens. Packaged food and supplements containing coconut will no longer be subject to mandatory allergen labeling under the US Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004.

The move was hailed by the EMB as a victory for the coconut industry, following decades of lobbying and collaboration between government agencies and industry groups.

In September 2023, the DTI, Department of Agriculture (DA), Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), and industry leaders led a policy mission to Washington, D.C., to engage with US government officials on the issue.

Discussions were further elevated to the Philippines-US Bilateral Strategic Dialogue and the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement meetings held in 2024.

"Achieved through the sustained efforts of the DTI, DA, PCA and private stakeholders, this progress underscores our commitment to support the development and growth of our coconut sector by addressing key market access and regulatory issues," Sykimte said.

Major consumer

The EMB said the US market is a major consumer of coconut-based goods, with more than 20,000 product variants incorporating coconut as an ingredient, ranging from food and beverages to personal care items.

"The delisting is expected to enhance market confidence in the use of coconut as an ingredient in food products and supplements, providing a significant boost for Philippine coconut exporters in the US market," EMB noted.

"It is a welcome development and great news for the coconut industry, not only for the Philippines but globally. The issue of food allergens has been running for decades. Finally, removing coconut as a tree nut eliminates one issue against it," United Coconut Associations of the Philippines (UCAP) Executive Director Yvonne Agustin said.

Coconut products remain one of the country's top export commodities, with shipments to the US amounting to \$524.92 million from January to October 2024, data from the Philippine Statistics Agency showed. ADVERTISEMENT

EMB said the delisting will enhance the Philippines' competitiveness in the US market, where demand for coconut oil, desiccated coconut, and copra has been robust.

The removal of coconut's allergen classification will likewise boost demand for a variety of coconut-based items, including refined and virgin coconut oil, coconut milk, coconut water, and coconut sugar, said the EMB.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/27/business/top-business/fda-move-to-boost-demand-for-coconuts/2044759>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA eyeing to build ₱3B worth of cold storage facilities this year

Ada Pelonia

January 27, 2025

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) plans to build around 99 cold storage facilities worth P3 billion this year to prolong the shelf life of fresh produce and ensure stable supply.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. approved the use of P1.5 billion in unprogrammed funds last year to kick start the cold storage network's development while the agency allocated another P1.5 billion through the 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA).

“The unprogrammed funds will be spent to build around 65 small or modular chiller-type cold storage facilities across the country and a large cold storage facility to be built in Camarines Sur,” Laurel said in a statement.

Two large facilities, one possibly in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, and another in Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija—along with around 31 modular units across the country are also lined up. Most of the small facilities are expected to start operating this year.

“By improving the cold chain infrastructure, we will strengthen the agricultural sector, reduce farm losses, extend the shelf life of agricultural products, stabilize supply and prices, and ensure food security,” Laurel said.

The project, which is part of a comprehensive logistics master plan under the agency's Agriculture and Fisheries Logistics Office (AFLO), also encompasses the development of a road network, agricultural seaports, and an integrated cold chain network to streamline the distribution of farm goods throughout the country.

Meanwhile, Laurel said the cold storage facilities' key features were sustainability and low cost of operation.

He said the refrigerated warehouses are hybrid infrastructure that could be powered by electricity from renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, and those supplied through the grid to ensure efficient and environmentally friendly operations.

“This approach not only addresses immediate agricultural needs but also aligns with broader environmental goals.”

The agency said construction of the large storage facilities is expected to take around 18 to 22 months after awarding the contract. Each facility will have a capacity of 2,800 to 3,500 pallet positions, depending on the products.

“The DA will oversee and manage these mega-cold storage facilities through and in cooperation with local government units, and farmers’ cooperatives and associations to ensure efficient operations and community involvement.”

It added that the modular refrigerated warehouses, which are the size of a 40-foot container van, will have a capacity of between 7 to 15 metric tons, depending on the agricultural products to be stored.

These warehouses are expected to be operational within three months of construction, allowing for a swift enhancement of cold storage capabilities nationwide.

“As the DA moves forward with these plans, it aims to create a more sustainable and efficient agricultural sector, benefiting both producers and consumers across the Philippines,” the agency said.

“With enhanced cold storage capabilities, the hope is to foster a thriving agricultural economy that can withstand the test of time.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/27/da-eyeing-to-build-%e2%82%b13b-worth-of-cold-storage-facilities-this-year/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

LandBank rolls out initiative to assist farm sector

BusinessMirror
January 27, 2025



This January 24, 2025, photo courtesy of the Land Bank of the Philippines shows Landbank President and CEO Lynette V. Ortiz (left) sharing a light moment on stage. To her left is Agriculture Undersecretary Roger V. Navarro

LAL-LO, Cagayan—The Land Bank of the Philippines (LandBank) announced it has launched a capacity-building program to “equip agricultural players with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed for sustained growth and success.”

In a statement, the state-run lender said it launched its “Agri-Fishery Support thru Capability Enhancement for Nationwide Development” (Ascend) program, which addresses the “critical need for tailored interventions among agricultural stakeholders to ensure productive and profitable agri-business ventures.”

The LandBank said the program is in line with Republic Act 11901 (“The Agriculture, Fisheries, and Rural Development (AFRD) Financing Enhancement Act of 2022”).

Under the program, the bank targets to support at least 10,000 small farmers, fishers, and agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) nationwide annually starting this year.

LandBank President and CEO Lynette V. Ortiz led the launch of the program last Friday at the Lal-lo Municipal Gymnasium here.

According to the lender, the event gathered around a thousand stakeholders in the agriculture sector from Cagayan and key representatives from other government and private partners.

Ortiz said that through the program, the lender aims “to elevate the livelihoods of local agricultural producers, empowering them to maximize their full potential and actively contribute to national economic growth.”

“This complements our continued efforts to provide accessible financial assistance and other meaningful support interventions across the agriculture value chain,” she added.

The Ascend program, according to the LandBank statement, delivers holistic support through six integrated components. The training and upskilling component provides technical training to strengthen individual and organizational capabilities, while the digital financial literacy component equips beneficiaries with essential skills for more effective financial management.

The program also employs “stakeholder mapping” to classify beneficiaries based on their capacity levels and financing access. Insights from this process will be utilized in “module development” to create customized training materials. The modes of training delivery include classroom sessions, virtual platforms, hands-on activities, demonstrations, coaching, and mentorships.

To ensure sustainable outcomes, the program incorporates a monitoring and evaluation component to assess the effectiveness of training modules and track the progress of beneficiaries. Additionally, the “market linkage” component connects beneficiaries to market opportunities through business clustering and other schemes.

According to the Landbank, the Ascend program serves as the capacity-building component of another of the lender’s program. The latter, called “Agrisenso Plus,” features expanded eligibility, lower interest rates, and simplified loan process to provide broader access to credit and other support interventions for all players in the agriculture value chain.

Eligible beneficiaries of the Ascend program include ARBs, duly registered farmers, as well as members of their household and their micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and agrarian reform communities, according to the LandBank.

Image credits: [Land Bank of the Philippines](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/27/landbank-rolls-out-initiative-to-assist-farm-sector/>

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:

Agarang aksiyon para sa better na buhay ng magsasaka at manggagawa

[Abby Binay](#)

January 27, 2025 | 12:00am

Gusto ko sanang makipag-usap sa inyo tungkol sa mga hakbang na ating isinusulong para sa mga magsasaka at mga manggagawa.

Unahin natin ang isyu ng presyo ng bigas. Alam po ninyo, kahit ako, naiirita sa taas ng presyo ng bigas na 'di naman yata makatotohanan. Sinabi ko nga, hindi sapat na puro salita lang mula sa gobyerno—dapat may aksiyon!

May mga batas na laban sa rice cartel at profiteering, pero hangga't walang naikukulong na smugglers at price manipulators, patuloy lang ang pagsasamantala. Kaya nga, ang solusyon dito? Dapat may masampolang ikulong!

Sabi ko rin, para hindi na dumaan pa sa mga middlemen, mas mainam kung ang gobyerno na ang bibili ng ani ng mga magsasaka. Kasi, sino ba ang yumayaman? Hindi ba't ang mga middlemen? Kaya, kailangan nating baguhin ang sistemang ito.

Ngayon naman, sa usapang manggagawa. Bilang isang senatorial aspirant, isinusulong ko ang tax exemptions para sa 13th month pay at overtime pay ng ating mga manggagawa.

Malaking tulong ito sa kanila, kasi magagamit nila ito para sa mga pangunahing pangangailangan—pambili ng pagkain, gamot, at pagpapaaral ng mga anak. May pangmatagalang benepisyo pa 'yan sa ating ekonomiya. Kapag tumaas ang spending ng mga tao, sisigla ang mga negosyo at mas maraming kita ang papasok sa gobyerno. So, kahit may mawawalang kita, babawiin din natin 'yan.

Sa ilalim ng kasalukuyang tax code, hanggang P90,000 lang ang non-taxable na 13th month pay kasama ang iba pang bonuses. Anumang higit doon, isinasama na sa taxable income.

Kaya kung hindi na ito kasama sa buwis, mas makikinabang ang mga pamilyang Pilipino, at maiiwasan nilang lalong maghirap habang patuloy ang pagtaas ng inflation.

Kaya sama-sama po tayo sa mga hakbang na ito. Magsama tayo para sa better at mas magaan buhay para sa ating mga magsasaka, manggagawa, at sa buong pamilya.

Maraming salamat po at mag-ingat po tayong lahat!

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/opinyon/2025/01/27/2417153/agarang-aksiyon-para-sa-better-na-buhay-ng-magsasaka-manggagawa>