

## CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY JANUARY 29, 2025

### **A. MANILA BULLETIN:**

Northern Samar acts vs ASF

'Napakataas': Costly MSRP on rice has led to 'government-endorsed collusion', says solons

Philippines to import thousands of goats, sheep to enhance local breeds

DA aims for NPCC approval this week to release rice buffer stocks

'Oh my God': House quinta-comm hits agencies' lack of urgency to make rice cheaper

Retailers give green light to DA's plan for affordable rice in grocery stores

### **B. THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

Drop in onion stocks no cause for alarm – DA

Failed biddings delay start of Philippines first border facility

Agriculture output dwindles to 8-year low in 2024

Gov't to go bankrupt, Filipinos to go hungrier

'Blank items' in 2025 budget brought to SC

### **C. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

DA mulls NFA rice buffer stock release amid high prices

Petition vs 2025 budget a desperate political survival bid, says solon

Solon, other petitioners as Supreme Court to nullify 2025 GAA

Egg prices are soaring in US due to bird flu

Israeli envoy seeks expansion of agri training program in PH

### **D. BUSINESS WORLD:**

2024 farm output shrinks 2.2%

Philippines Q4 farm output shrinks for a third straight quarter

#### **E. REMATE:**

Max SRP sa baboy target ipataw ng DA vs overpricing

Food Security Emergency nakaumang sa Pebrero

DTI: Posibleng magdeklara ng food security emergency ngayong linggo

PH kapos sa 2024 agri output target

3M sako ng bigas ipamamahagi ng NFA sa nat'l food security emergency

Suplay ng pulang sibuyas sapat, walang taas-presyo – DA

#### **F. ABANTE:**

Food security emergency ilalarga na

#### **G. PEOPLE'S JOURNAL:**

Asian journal marks 20 years, navigates a changing agricultural landscape

SEARCA chief rallies new agriculturists ahead of new PH Agri Act

#### **H. THE MANILA TIMES:**

Farm outputs shrinks anew in fourth quarter

#### **I. BUSINESS MIRROR:**

30K MT monthly release of rice to agencies, LGUs eyed

PHL exporters of 'bagoong' lose P53.6 million in export revenues since US imposed import ban–DTI-EMB data

Export receipts from tobacco fall in 2024–NTA

Manila halts testing of porcine PAP from ASF-hit nations

PHL seen completing field trials for bird flu vaccines in March

Egg prices are soaring. Don't expect that to change anytime soon

#### **J. PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:**

Food emergency sa bigas, simula na sa Pebrero - DA

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **Northern Samar acts vs ASF**

**BY MARIE TONETTE MARTICIO**

Jan 29, 2025 04:41 PM

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TACLOBAN CITY – The provincial government of Northern Samar through the Provincial Agriculture and Veterinary Office is taking significant steps to prevent swine mortality from African Swine Fever in the province.

Dr. Jose Luis Acompañado, the Provincial Veterinarian and officer-in-charge of the Provincial Agriculture Office, bared that no cases have been recorded but the threat of ASF remains and that the province has to protect its swine industry.

“While there is already a reported vaccine against ASF, we can’t be complacent until it becomes available for use, and must implement measures to prevent it from adversely affecting our swine growers,” he said.

He recommended limiting the movement of live swine or pork meat in Northern Samar through checkpoints in municipalities.

The checkpoints manned by local government units in cooperation with law enforcement agencies will ask a veterinary health certificate issued by the Municipal Agriculturist from the point of origin, transport or shipping permit, and the registration of the vehicle or swine carrier.

Without these, the swine or pork will be asked to be returned to the origin, but if exhibiting sickness, will be confiscated and dealt with according to established rules.

Municipal veterinarians proposed to localize the declaration of ASF cases.

Bureau of Animal Industry representative Dr. Rico Espiña said he would raise the recommendation to the Department of Agriculture. DA is the authorized agency to declare ASF outbreak after confirmatory tests of suspected cases.

Based on the report of municipal agriculture offices, some areas in the province experienced swine deaths after the flooding last November and December but these were not related to ASF.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/29/northern-samar-acts-vs-asf>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# 'Napakataas': Costly MSRP on rice has led to 'government-endorsed collusion', says solons

**BY ELLSON QUISMORIO**

Jan 29, 2025 01:42 PM

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## AT A GLANCE

- Solons blasted the Department of Agriculture (DA) for insisting on the hefty maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of P58 per kilo for imported premium rice, despite mounting criticism from Congress and the public.



Quezon 1st district Rep. Mark Enverga (left), Marikina City 2nd district Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo (PPAB) Solons blasted the Department of Agriculture (DA) for insisting on the hefty maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of P58 per kilo for imported premium rice, despite mounting criticism from Congress and the public.

During a hearing of the House quinta-committee (quinta-comm) on Tuesday, Jan. 28, congressmen branded the price cap as excessively high and harmful to consumers. Worse, it is a policy that emboldens collusion among rice retailers.

They slammed the DA's decision to maintain the P58 price cap while planning only gradual reductions to P55 in February and P49 in March. They called the agency's approach both ineffectual and out of touch with the realities faced by struggling Filipino households.

Quezon 1st district Rep. Wilfredo Mark Enverga, a co-chairman of the quinta-comm--also known as the "Murang Pagkain Super-committee"--questioned the rationale behind the "unnecessarily high" P58 MSRP.

"The goal should be to influence the supply chain to reduce profit margins across the board. But why are we allowing such a large markup? Shouldn't we pressure everyone to adjust their profit margins instead?" he asked.

Enverga further criticized the DA's plan to gradually lower the price, as he asserted that immediate reductions are more beneficial.

“If the MSRP can go down, then it should go down immediately. Why wait? Why allow additional profits for traders and retailers when prices can already be lowered?” he argued.

Marikina City 2nd district Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo delivered an even sharper rebuke, as she described the MSRP as a direct enabler of anti-competitive practices.

She said the DA’s price ceiling effectively gave retailers a government-approved excuse to collude at high prices for the staple grain.

“Ang nangyayari is they (retailers) now collude around the higher MSRP. Sasabihin ng mga retailers, ‘Eh allowed naman pala ang MSRP na P58. O tayong lahat, magbenta na lang tayo at P58.’ Kahit na kaya naman pala nila magbenta at P38,” Quimbo said.

(What’s happening is that retailers now collude around the higher MSRP. The retailers will say, ‘Since the MSRP of P58 is allowed, let’s all sell rice at P58.’ Even if they can actually sell it at P38.)

“Kumbaga, naging (In other words, it has become) government-endorsed collusion. Instead of transparency and competition, this creates a market standard that works against the public,” she added.

Bulacan 2nd district Rep. Tina Pancho called the DA’s P58 price as fundamentally unfair to the Filipino people.

“Napakataas po nito. Parang ang nangyayari po, ang gobyerno ang nagbibigay ng pahintulot na ibenta ito sa mataas dahil ‘yun ang legal. So, hindi po talaga tayo bababa,” Pancho said.

(This is very high. What’s happening is that the government itself is allowing the high prices because it’s legal. So that means prices won’t go down.)

DA Assistant Secretary Genevieve Guevarra defended the agency’s pricing decision.

She explained that the P58 MSRP was based on global rice prices, freight, insurance, and tariffs. She said that compliance in Metro Manila markets was high.

“Ngayon po sa pagmo-monitor natin, dalawa na lang pong brands ang nakikita natin na nasa P58 na range na ‘yan. Lahat po halos ng 30 markets na mino-monitor natin ngayon ay nagko-comply sa P58 MSRP,” Guevarra said.

(Based on our current monitoring, we only see two brands within the P58 range. Almost all of the 30 markets that we’re monitoring have complied with the P58 MSRP.)

“The secretary (Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.) has declared that the plan is to lower it to P55 and then to P49 as long as world market prices allow,” she told the House members.

The quinta-comm, led by overall chairman Albay 2nd district Rep. Joey Salceda, has demanded a full written explanation from the DA on the mechanics and computations of the MSRP.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/29/costly-msrp-on-rice-has-led-to-government-endorsed-collusion>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **Philippines to import thousands of goats, sheep to enhance local breeds**

**BY DEXTER BARRO II**

Jan 29, 2025 01:31 PM

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The Department of Agriculture (DA) has approved the importation of breeder goats and sheep to improve the genetics of local livestock and bolster the country's goat and sheep industries, particularly in Mindanao.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement on Wednesday, Jan. 29, that the DA approved the importation of 1,520 breeder goats and 4,310 sheep to strengthen the country's goat and sheep farming sectors.

The imported goats—155 Anglo Nubian bucks, 175 Boer bucks, and 1,190 Boer does—will be distributed to nucleus and multiplier farms in Barili, Cebu, and Makilala, North Cotabato. The sheep, consisting of 260 Dorper rams and 4,050 Dorper ewes, will be sent to North Cotabato.

The DA has allocated funds for the importation under the 2024 budget, and the bidding process is yet to be scheduled. The National Livestock Program will issue a notice of award, after which the winning bidder must deliver the animals within 90 days.

To ensure quality, the imported goats and sheep must be between six and 15 months old and meet specific weight requirements: goats must weigh at least 35 kilos (bucks) and 30 kilos (does) after quarantine, and sheep must weigh at least 40 kilos (rams) and 35 kilos (ewes).

The imported sheep must be full-blooded and come from registered farms.

“Raising small ruminants such as goats and sheep could supplement farmers' income, generate employment, and support food security efforts,” Tiu Laurel added.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/29/da-approves-goat-sheep-importation>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **DA aims for NPCC approval this week to release rice buffer stocks**

**BY DEXTER BARRO II**

Jan 29, 2025 01:16 PM

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The government is moving to declare a national food security emergency this week in response to persistently high rice prices in some regions, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said.

In a statement, Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. said Wednesday, Jan. 29, that he aims to obtain approval from the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) this week for the declaration, which would authorize the release of rice buffer stocks.

Despite global rice price reductions and the lowering of rice tariffs from 35 percent to 15 percent in July 2022, certain areas continue to face elevated rice prices.

The DA said the food security emergency measure is intended to stabilize prices and ensure access to affordable rice for Filipino consumers. National Food Authority (NFA) Administrator Larry Lacson, meanwhile, said that the agency plans to release 150,000 metric tons of rice (approximately three million 50-kilo bags) over six months, prioritizing areas with the highest rice prices.

“This monthly release of approximately 30,000 metric tons will alleviate high rice prices and prepare NFA warehouses for the upcoming *palay* procurement season,” Lacson explained.

The NFA also plans to procure *palay* at P23 per kilo during the rice harvest season, which begins in mid-February.

This procurement effort aims to increase supply and comply with the amended Rice Tariffication Law, which mandates a 15-day rice buffer stock (555,000 metric tons) to meet national consumption needs.

Lacson noted that adequate buffer stocks will be maintained to address potential disasters or emergencies.

Earlier, Tiu Laurel told reporters that the target date for implementing a food security emergency for rice is Feb. 1, with guidelines to be released before the end of the month.

The agency initially expected to declare the emergency Wednesday last week, but it has been delayed because the NPCC’s approved resolution is still circulating within the DA.

“The principle is technically approved; it’s just the fine print now,” Tiu Laurel said.

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. This would allow the NFA to release buffer stock rice to stabilize local prices. The NFA currently holds 300,000 metric tons of rice in buffer stocks.

Tiu Laurel, also the chairperson of the NFA Council, said their intention is to “flush out” the stocks within six months, prioritizing release in areas near warehouses to minimize freight costs.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/29/gov-t-to-decide-on-food-emergency-this-week>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# 'Oh my God': House quinta-comm hits agencies' lack of urgency to make rice cheaper

**BY ELLSON QUISMORIO**

Jan 28, 2025 05:35 PM

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## AT A GLANCE

- Solons comprising the House quinta-committee (quinta-comm) slammed the apparent lack of urgency from the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and National Food Authority (NFA) to bring down prices of rice--the Filipino staple food.



House of Representatives (Ellson Quismorio/ MANILA BULLETIN)

Solons comprising the House quinta-committee (quinta-comm) slammed the apparent lack of urgency from the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and National Food Authority (NFA) to bring down prices of rice--the Filipino staple food.

During the quinta-comm's hearing on Tuesday, Jan. 28, the congressmen called out agency officials for their failure to submit a draft of a food security emergency declaration over a week after President Marcos announced that he favored such a pronouncement.

“The declaration of recommendation to declare a food security emergency, umiikot na po ‘yung papel (the paper is going around),” DA Undersecretary Christopher Morales informed the so-called "Murang Pagkain Super-committee" chaired by Albay 2nd Rep. Joey Salceda.

Wondering what the delay was about, Marikina City 2nd district Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo asked, “Ano pa ‘yung kulang? (What is missing?)”



“We’re still waiting for the recommendation from the NPCC (National Price Coordinating Council) for the declaration. Yung paper po kasi I think umiikot nga (I think the paper is going around),” Morales answered.

To this, Salceda commented: “Oh my God.”

Oriental Mindoro 1st district Rep. Arnan Panaligan helped crystallized Salceda's shock by saying that the concerned officials “have no sense of urgency” on the matter.

“Sabi nga ni Cong. Stella, emergency, papaikutin pa ang papel. ‘Di ba pag may sunog, emergency, magpapa-alam pa ba ‘yung mga bumbero sa kanyang mga superior bago siya makaalis sa sitwasyon?” Panaligan said.

(Like what Cong. Stella said, there's an emergency, but the paper still needs to make its rounds. If there's a fire, an emergency, should the firefighters seek permission from its superiors first before leaving the situation.)

Panaligan urged DA to be “dynamic and aggressive” in the campaign to bring down food prices, particularly that of rice.

### **Still pricey**

In Tuesday’s hearing, NFA Administrator Larry Lacson said the law prohibits his agency from selling rice without a declaration of a food security emergency.

If and when the President issues such declaration, Lacson said NFA would sell about 300,000 bags of “aging” stocks at P29 per kilo and up to 500,000 bags of “regular” stocks at a “subsidized price” of P38 per kilo.

He said the subsidy, recorded as a loss on the part of NFA, is P10 per kilo, without which the agency would sell its rice at P48.

The NFA chief’s statements prompted Salceda to comment, “So as of now, NFA is doing nothing. Whose fault is that? What did we do, why did we put ‘emergency’ in the law?”

For Quimbo, the NFA's planned selling price of P38 per kilo is still pricey. She told the committee that in one barangay in Marikina, two retailers “were selling their stocks consistently at P39 per kilo”.

When Quimbo inquired, the retailers told her that their supply came directly from rice millers in Bulacan and Nueva Ecija.

“Why can’t the [DA] do that?” Quimbo asked.

Salceda recalled that in a meeting attended by House members and DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel last month, Bulacan-based rice millers and traders committed to sell their stocks at P37 per kilo.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/28/quinta-comm-hits-agencies-lack-of-urgency-to-make-rice-cheaper>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Retailers give green light to DA's plan for affordable rice in grocery stores

**BY DEXTER BARRO II**

Jan 28, 2025 11:23 AM

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## AT A GLANCE

- The Philippine Retailers Association (PRA) is welcoming the plan of the Department of Agriculture (DA) to have groceries and convenience stores sell affordable rice, ranging from P29 to P45.

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The Philippine Retailers Association (PRA) is welcoming the plan of the Department of Agriculture (DA) to have groceries and convenience stores sell affordable rice, ranging from P29 to P45.

PRA President Roberto Claudio gave this affirmation on the sidelines of the 2025 CEO Awards in Bonifacio Global City (BGC) on Monday evening, Jan. 27.

“Walang problema ‘yun (That’s no problem). For so long as the source is also cheap, retailers will [welcome it],” Claudio told reporters.

If it is feasible, he said retailers will also consider bringing down the rice prices further.

DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel earlier announced that the rollout of affordable rice in retail stores will launch by mid-February or, at the latest, March 1.

This initiative will include the P29-per-kilo rice, which will only be available for the country’s vulnerable sectors, as well as the agency’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.

Claudio, Chairman of Toby’s Sports, noted that rice is not a high margin product for most retailers.

“The problem is the people who are coordinating and bringing it in. That’s where the price discrepancies are incurring,” he explained.

When asked about the sector’s concerns about the program, Claudio said they are mostly apprehensive about the logistics and distribution channels.

“For some agricultural products, there is deficiency in storage, there is deterioration in rice, deterioration of vegetable, so it reduces the revenue of the farmers,” the PRA President said.

“We need to improve our channel of distribution, especially storage and logistics,” he added.

Food Terminal Inc. (FTI), a state-owned corporation, has been tasked by the DA to handle the supply and packaging of rice distributed through participating retail stores.

Over 3,200 retail outlets across the country, including SM, Robinsons, Puregold, 7-Eleven, and MerryMart, are expected to sell the affordable rice.

Claudio, for his part, said the government may harness artificial intelligence (AI) to improve the distribution channels of agricultural products such as rice.

At the same time, he said AI can also help further improve retailing in the country.

“[With AI] we can give better information for consumers, they can inquire for better specifications of the products and then, the intelligence assessment whether a product is good or bad,” he said.

Claudio, however, stressed that AI utilization is still under “calculation” period for retail firms since it may trigger a reduced need for manpower, if left unchecked.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/28/philippine-retailers-welcomes-initiative-to-sell-affordable-rice>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Drop in onion stocks no cause for alarm – DA

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

January 29, 2025 | 12:00am



The Department of Agriculture (DA) has assured the public that the prices of red onion will not skyrocket like they did in previous years, citing the start of the local harvest that is expected to replenish dwindling stocks in cold storage facilities nationwide.

Philstar.com / Irra Lising

MANILA, Philippines — Will consumers be weeping again over the steep price of onions?

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has assured the public that the prices of red onion will not skyrocket like they did in previous years, citing the start of the local harvest that is expected to replenish dwindling stocks in cold storage facilities nationwide.

DA Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa attributed the recent uptick in onion prices to the dwindling stocks in cold storage. However, he said these stocks are gradually being replaced by the ongoing new harvest.

“There is no cause for alarm because the harvest is there,” De Mesa said.

He emphasized that onions cannot be stored for too long as this leads to spoilage, forcing some traders to release their overstaying stocks immediately.

Industry players earlier noted that onions can typically be in cold storage for six months under ideal conditions.

Beyond this, the produce is at risk of spoilage or sprouting.

Red onions in cold storage nationwide, as of Jan. 17, were estimated at around 8,500 metric tons while yellow onion stocks stood at 1,628.4 MT, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

Based on the country's average daily consumption, the BPI estimated that the red onion stocks would last only until Feb. 1, while the yellow onion stocks would be depleted within the week.

Meanwhile, the newly harvested onions are expected to enter cold storage facilities this quarter.

About 40,334.41 MT of locally produced red onions will likely be stored until the end of March, ensuring a supply of red onions for at least 83 days, or until April 10, the agency added.

Meanwhile, around 19,450 MT of yellow onions are expected to be produced and stored this quarter, along with an estimated 2,514 MT of imported yellow onions expected to arrive as of Jan. 16.

The combined supply of yellow onions is projected to last for 161 days, or until June 27.

Last year, the red onion industry faced logistical challenges due to an abundant harvest that resulted in surplus stocks.

This, sources said, posed storage concerns for traders as some of the stocks exceeded the ideal storage duration.

Retail prices of red onions have started to climb at the start of this year with the DA's latest price monitoring report showing that red onions are now ranging between P100 and P180 per kilo in Metro Manila markets.

Two years ago, red onion prices spiked beyond P500 per kilo due to a shortfall in domestic supply coupled by delayed government importation.

### **Pork max SRP mulled**

Amid the spike in pork retail prices and flooding of imported frozen products, a maximum suggested retail price (SRP) is being considered by the DA.

The farmgate price of pork only ranged between P200 and P220 per kilo, but retail prices reached as high as P460 per kilo, De Mesa said yesterday.

"There was abuse in the prices of pork in the markets," he noted.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. implemented on Jan. 20 a max SRP of P58 on imported rice after tariff cuts failed to lower rice prices.

Despite high pork retail prices, De Mesa said there is no supply shortage.

This was echoed by farmers' group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag), which said local stocks totaled 800 million kilos.

Of the total stocks, 320 million kilos of pork are stored in licensed slaughterhouses of the National Meat Inspection Service, Sinag executive director Jayson Cainglet said yesterday.

Non-accredited slaughterhouses, he said, account for 400 to 500 million kilos of pork.

"Imported pork is flooding the local market because of Executive Order 62. Similar to rice, the retail price is going up," Cainglet said, referring to reduced tariffs' failure to lower prices.

Citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority and Bureau of Animal Industry, Cainglet said pork consumption in 2024 totaled 1.55 million metric tons, of which 733,000 MT or 70 percent came from imported pork.

“Only pork importers and traders benefited from EO 62 and the high retail price of pork,” he told The STAR.

### **Food security emergency**

Tiu Laurel is expected to declare a food security emergency in the first week of February, De Mesa said.

Despite delays in its implementation, declaring a food security emergency remains urgent, he maintained.

At yesterday’s House quinta committee hearing, De Mesa recalled trade officials saying that the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC)’s resolution will be transmitted to the DA in two working days.

Tiu Laurel is awaiting the NPCC’s resolution before declaring a food security emergency.

Meanwhile, the DA wants Congress to pass a law returning the National Food Authority (NFA)’s function to intervene in the market even without declaring a food security emergency.

The NFA, he said, has prepared guidelines once it is allowed to release its rice buffer stocks to the market and replace them with locally produced palay.

Unloading 300,000 MT of rice from NFA warehouses would help reduce prices by augmenting supply, Tiu Laurel has said.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/29/2417671/drop-onion-stocks-no-cause-alarm-da>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Failed biddings delay start of Philippines first border facility

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

January 29, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — A series of failed bidding stalled the operationalization of the Cold Examination Facility for Agriculture (CEFA) in Bulacan, forcing the Department of Agriculture (DA) to target its completion before the end of the first half.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the establishment of the CEFA in Angat, Bulacan faced a roadblock last year as the DA declared failed bidding for multiple components of the projects.

Some of the procurement affected were for X-ray machines, laboratory and even construction works, Tiu Laurel said.

Nonetheless, the agriculture chief assured the public that the CEFA, which would serve as the country's first border facility, would still push through but would just be delayed.

The first border facility was earlier eyed to be operational between January and February this year.

“It will push through but there will be delays because we have to rebid. We will try to finish everything hopefully by the first half,” Tiu Laurel said.

He noted that portions of the P1.2-billion allocation for the CEFA project of the DA last year have been reverted to the National Treasury due to the failed biddings.

The DA aims to put up at least five CEFAs. The other four facilities would be in Manila, Subic, Davao and General Santos City, which Tiu Laurel earlier noted would be operational by September.

The CEFA, considered as the country's first border facility, is being touted by the government as a state-of-the-art examination facility capable of scrutinizing all imported agricultural commodities.

The facility is part of the government's efforts to curb smuggling and strengthen the state's capacity against animal diseases and pests.

The facilities will also allow various food safety regulatory agencies to conduct mandatory inspections of imported farm products pursuant to their mandates under the Food Safety Act of 2013.

The project was first approved in late 2019 by former president Rodrigo Duterte but has not seen the light of the day until today.

The call of various industry groups on the government to fast-track the establishment of the first border facilities has been mounting in recent years amid the intrusion and spread of trans-boundary animal diseases such as bird flu and African swine fever in the country.

The construction of the first border facilities has been delayed due to various issues including the pandemic and logistical woes.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/01/29/2417537/failed-biddings-delay-start-philippines-first-border-facility>



**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Agriculture output dwindles to 8-year low in 2024

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

January 29, 2025 | 12:00am



PSA data showed that the combined value was the lowest since the P1.722 trillion recorded in 2016 and was also 2.2 percent lower than 2023's P1.76 trillion.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The value of the country's agriculture and fisheries output fell by 2.2 percent to P1.725 trillion in 2024, the lowest in eight years as unfavorable weather conditions and pests curbed production nationwide, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

PSA data showed that the combined value was the lowest since the P1.722 trillion recorded in 2016 and was also 2.2 percent lower than 2023's P1.76 trillion.

The data also showed that the rate of decline in the value of the agriculture and fisheries production last year was the steepest since 2000 when the time series began.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) attributed the decline to the ill effects of extreme weather conditions as well as pests and diseases last year that resulted in cumulative losses of P57 billion in the agriculture and fisheries sector.

At least 1.4 million farmers incurred P57.78 billion in losses last year after 2.18 million metric tons (MT) of their production were damaged by El Niño, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, pests and diseases, according to the DA.

"This is one of the biggest losses that the agriculture sector has recorded ever for a given year," Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said.

University of Asia and the Pacific – Center for Food and Agri Business (UA&P-CFA) executive director Marie Annette Galvez-Dacul agreed with the DA that El Niño and La Niña disrupted the country's agricultural production last year.

Furthermore, the persistence of transboundary animal diseases such as African swine fever impacted livestock production while the closed fishing season in the fourth quarter affected fisheries output, Dacul said.

“In 2025, UA&P-CFA expects modest growth for crops and livestock at zero to one percent, with poultry continuing to lead at five to six percent growth,” Dacul said.

“Fisheries output is projected to range from a 0.5 percent decline to 0.5 percent growth. The election year is expected to drive higher food demand, fueled by increased spending during the campaign season,” Dacul added.

Three out of the four subsectors posted contraction last year, with the poultry subsector the only one that grew on an annual basis.

The crops subsector, which contributed half of the total agriculture and fisheries output, recorded a P960.26 billion in output last year, about four percent lower than the P1 trillion recorded in 2023.

Meanwhile, the value of the production of the livestock sector declined by 4.25 percent year-on-year while fisheries output value fell by 1.1 percent, according to the PSA.

Poultry production last year expanded by 6.6 percent to P279.41 billion from P262.03 billion in 2023.

Volume wise, full-year crops production last year fell by 6.3 percent to 80.41 million MT from 85.83 million MT in 2023, according to the PSA.

Meanwhile, volume of livestock output declined by four percent to 2.17 million MT from 2.26 million MT. Likewise, volume of fisheries produced last year contracted by five percent year-on-year to 4.05 million MT from 4.26 million MT.

Poultry production last year reached 2.94 million MT, about 6.6 percent higher than the 2.76 million MT recorded in 2023, according to the PSA.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/01/29/2417560/agriculture-output-dwindles-8-year-low-2024>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Gov't to go bankrupt, Filipinos to go hungrier



**GOTCHA - Jarius Bondoc - The Philippine Star**

January 29, 2025 | 12:00am

Politicos and bureaucrats misspend trillions of pesos each year.

At the rate they're going, they'll bankrupt the government.

In 2024 they budgeted P5.768 trillion. Short of revenues by 42.65 percent, they borrowed P2.46 trillion.

This 2025 they budgeted P6.326 trillion. Again short by 40.23 percent, they'll borrow P2.545 trillion.

Imagine a family spending P6,326 every week, but having to loan two-fifths of it, or P2,545. It would soon keel over.

By yearend, total public debt, including past admins, will be P17.353 trillion. It will overshoot P20 trillion by the time President Bongbong Marcos steps down in 2028.

How will poor, hungry, undereducated Filipinos repay that?

Politicos and bureaucrats steal at least 20 percent of yearly budgets, the IMF and World Bank long reported.

In 2024 they looted P1.153 trillion – from public works and political ayuda, among others. They engaged in “7-7-7” and “30-30-30” rackets from June to December.

This 2025 they'll plunder P1.265 trillion.

With their loot they buy nonessentials – signature bags, jewelry, machine pistols, luxury cars, mansions – all with no strategic development effect.

They only burden the economy. No care for the people.



#### Presidential Communications Office

Last Christmastime two in three families rated themselves poor, and one in four starved. Those are SWS's worst poverty and hunger stats since 2003 and 2020, respectively.

Seventy-six million Filipinos tightened their belts. Food, water, medicines, schooling, electricity, gas, clothing, groceries, rent and repairs costs shot up.

Rice sold at more than P60 a kilo – three times BBM's campaign lie of P20. The poor had to eat less.

Congressmen, senators and Cabinet members blamed it all on typhoons. Yet they're the real culprits.

Every year they steal hundreds of billions of pesos in flood funds. In his July 2024 State of the Nation, BBM bragged about 5,500 completed flood works. All ghost, it turned out.

Two days of heavy rain ensued. Floods deepened and widened. People lost homes, shops, farms, businesses, belongings, livelihoods. Work, commerce, tourism halted. Evacuation facilities and relief goods were inadequate.

People's misery multiplied.

Plunderers didn't stop. They took P60 billion of an intended P90 billion from PhilHealth. Plus, P717 billion from Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. All to put into overpriced highway rock nettings, cat's eyes and roller safety barriers.

The previous year they already pillaged P50 billion from Landbank, P25 billion from DBP and P50 billion from Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

BSP had to sell 25 tons of gold, and its governor left. DBP suddenly had no more money for rural business loans, and its chairman also left. Landbank became undercapitalized; salaries and deposits of government employees, public school teachers, health workers, soldiers, policemen and retirees' pensions are in peril.

They even played with rice. Last June, BBM slashed import tariffs from 35 to only 15 percent. By yearend 2024, Customs collections dropped P14.5 billion.

By law, that money could've gone to productivity aid to 2.4 million rice farmers. It's what consumers could've saved in buying the staple.

Instead, a rice cartel profited P14.5 billion. A high Customs official colluded with a handful of importers-wholesalers to control three-fourths of the trade. They have a Very Influential Protector in Malacañang.

Now they're making a show of solving the rice price crisis. The Department of Agriculture imposed a price cap of P58 per kilo of imported stock. DA forcibly will lessen it to P50 in February and P40 in March.

Market vendors will bear the brunt of price control, since importers-wholesalers sell high to them. Officials warn them about the new law that prescribes life imprisonment on overpricers.

For good measure, Sec. Francis Tiu Laurel ordered the National Food Authority to sell its emergency buffer stocks at only P40 per kilo.

At that rate NFA will lose P7 per kilo, or P2.331 billion, from its fire sale of 333,000 tons.

Now NFA must buy domestic palay to replenish its stock – 15 days' worth, no longer just nine, under a new law. It needs P18 billion for that. But its budget for 2025 is only P9 billion.

But politicians and bureaucrats don't worry about that. They've allocated to themselves political ayuda: P26-billion AKAP, P15-billion TUPAD, P45-billion AICS – all for vote buying in May.

\* \* \*

Catch Sapol radio show, Saturdays, 8 to 10 a.m., dwIZ (882-AM).

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<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2025/01/29/2417581/govt-go-bankrupt-filipinos-go-hungrier>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# ‘Blank items’ in 2025 budget brought to SC

[Daphne Galvez](#) - The Philippine Star

January 29, 2025 | 12:00am



Davao City 3rd District Rep. Isidro Ungab and former executive secretary Vic Rodriguez have filed before the Supreme Court (SC) a petition for certiorari and prohibition against the 2025 General Appropriations Act.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Nearly a month after its enactment, the 2025 national budget may again come under scrutiny – this time by the Supreme Court, which is being asked to declare the outlay unconstitutional.

Davao City 3rd District Rep. Isidro Ungab and former executive secretary Vic Rodriguez have filed before the Supreme Court (SC) a petition for certiorari and prohibition against the 2025 General Appropriations Act.

The GAA violated Article VI, Section 27 of the 1987 Constitution when members of the bicameral conference committee left blanks in its report on budget allocations for the National Irrigation Administration, Department of Agriculture and the Philippine Coconut Authority, the petitioners said.

These blanks, they said, were “very dubious and dangerous as the budgets for the said offices and programs remain undetermined.”

“Clearly, the Bicameral Conference Committee committed grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess jurisdiction when it signed the committee report on 2025 National Budget filled with blanks,” the petitioners stated.

They also claimed the 2025 budget law violated the Constitution for not giving the education sector the highest budget allocation.

Sought for comment, Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin said in a text message it is premature to react to the legal challenge, and stressed it's the Office of the Solicitor General which will issue a statement on the matter.

In their petition, Rodriguez and Ungab said the 2025 GAA only "gave the impression" that the education sector got the lion's share of the budget as the figures were "merely bloated" by the inclusion of non-education-related agencies.

It said budget appropriations for the Philippine Military Academy, Philippine National Police Academy, National Defense College of the Philippines, which are under the Department of National Defense and were historically classified under the defense sector, "were lumped with the appropriations for the education sector."

Likewise, budget appropriations for the Local Government Academy, Philippine Public Safety College, Philippine Science High School, Science Education Institute, which were classified in other non-education sectors, were included under the budget for the education sector.

"However, a scrutiny of the foregoing allocation would demonstrate the resolve of the present government to assign the highest budgetary priority to the infrastructure sector, headlined by the DPWH (Department of Public Works and Highways)," the petitioners said, adding that this was a violation of Article XIV, Section 5(5) of the Constitution.

The petitioners also noted budget re-alignments which supposedly increased the proposed budget appropriations for Congress and other line agencies, in violation of Article VI, Section 25(1) of the Constitution as it exceeded the amounts recommended by the President in the National Expenditure Program.

From the proposed budget of P16.35 billion for the House of Representatives, they said the budget ballooned to P33.67 billion when the bill was passed into law. For the Senate, there was a "more modest" increase from P12.83 billion to P13.93 billion.

They also claimed "not a single centavo" was appropriated for the Philippine Health Insurance Corp.(PhilHealth), and justifying it with the supposed existence of P600 billion in reserve funds of the state insurer.

PhilHealth, as a result, would not be able to provide health benefits to its beneficiaries as mandated in the Universal Health Care Act, in violation of the constitutional right to health of all Filipinos.

"On this score, it cannot be denied that the 2025 GAA is unconstitutional and anti-working class," the petitioners said.

Respondents in the petition were the House of Representatives represented by Speaker Martin Romualdez, the Senate represented by Senate President Francis Escudero, and Executive Secretary Bersamin.

Solicitor General Menardo Guevarra said the government will comment on the petition only if directed to do so by the Supreme Court.

"In the meantime the validity, regularity, and constitutionality of the 2025 GAA is legally presumed," Guevarra said.

### **‘Opportunity’ for SC**

Escudero said the Senate welcomes the petition as it provides “an opportunity for the Supreme Court, the third branch of government, to participate in the budget process.”

“The petition should not be feared and should not cause any worry. This just goes to show how alive our democracy is about any law, including the budget,” he added.

But Escudero said the presence of blank items in the bicameral conference committee report on the 2025 GAA – as claimed by Ungab and former president Rodrigo Duterte – was not enough basis to invalidate the GAA.

He said the blanks were there to enable staff to correct clerical errors in the bicam report, adding that there were no more blank items in the enrolled bill that served as the basis of the GAA.

“There are no discrepancies in the GAA. It is the law – not the bicam report – that is questioned for its constitutionality,” Escudero said.

“Clerical errors can be corrected in the report. In cases of conflict between the journal and the enrolled bill, the Supreme Court has a concept of journal entry rule, or the enrolled bill principle. The law is the bill signed by the President, not the bicameral conference committee report,” he added.

For some lawmakers, the filing of petition with the SC questioning the GAA is nothing but a ploy to destabilize the Marcos administration.

“The petition is more than just a legal maneuver – it is a calculated political gambit that exposes their intent to obstruct progress and destabilize the administration of President Marcos Jr.,” Rep. Paolo Ortega V said.

“Let us not mince words: This petition is an effort to undo the decision of Congress to cut P1.3 billion from the budget of the Office of the Vice President, a decision rooted in Congress’ constitutional duty to ensure that public funds are judiciously allocated,” Ortega pointed out.

Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo of the second district of Marikina City, who now sits as acting chairperson of the House of Representatives’ appropriations committee, maintained that the “ratification of the corrected bicameral committee conference report is unnecessary.”

“This is simply because Omnibus Provision 2 of the Report, which was ratified by the members, allows for the possibility of corrections, within limits stated in Omnibus Provision 1 (typographical errors and adjustments as a consequence of amendments),” she said.

Ortega said Rodriguez’s and Ungab’s filing of SC petition “reflects an alarming pattern of actions aimed at creating political uncertainty and diverting attention from the pressing needs of the Filipino people.”

“The motives behind this petition are suspect, to say the least. This is not just about budgetary provisions – it is about political leverage. The narrative being constructed here is clear: sow doubt about the legitimacy of the 2025 GAA, delay its implementation, and weaken the administration,” he said.

He called the filing of the petition “part of a broader scheme to undermine President Marcos and position Vice President Sara Duterte for an eventual takeover.”



“These tactics are divisive and dangerous, especially at a time when the Filipino people expect their leaders to focus on solutions rather than scheming. It is not just the government’s stability that is at stake – it is the trust of the people in our institutions,” he said.

For former senator Panfilo Lacson, the House of Representatives is at fault for allowing the Technical Working Group of its contingent in the bicameral conference committee to fill out the blank portion of the GAA.

Lacson said Malacañang has no accountability in the controversy since Marcos signed the version corrected by Quimbo of the committee on appropriations.

“I agree with (former) senator (Vicente) Tito Sotto, that some of our lawmakers should review the parliamentary procedures because when the amendment is substantial, especially when you change the figures, for example P1 billion will be missing, then the technical working group will fill it out, that is not a typographical error or ministerial amendment that you can delegate to the technical working group,” Lacson said in an interview with “Storycon” on One News.

“Whenever the changes are substantial, the amendment or changes must be done on the floor, and the approval should be in the plenary. It cannot be done outside the plenary,” he added. — **Marc Jayson Cayabyab, Delon Porcalla, Jose Rodel Clapano, Alexis Romero**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/29/2417663/blank-items-2025-budget-brought-sc>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# DA mulls NFA rice buffer stock release amid high prices

By: [Marita Moaje](#) -

[Philippine News Agency](#) / 04:07 PM January 29, 2025



(INQUIRER FILE PHOTO)

MANILA – The Department of Agriculture (DA) is set to release 150,000 metric tons of National Food Authority (NFA) rice stocks to mitigate high prices and address potential food security emergencies.

In a press release on Wednesday, the plan involves distributing around three million 50-kilogram bags over six months, which aims to stabilize rice prices in areas most affected by cost surges.

It is also set to procure palay at P23 per kilo in the coming months, with the rice harvest season starting mid-February.

“This monthly release of approximately 30,000 metric tons will alleviate high rice prices and prepare NFA warehouses for the upcoming palay procurement season,” NFA Administrator Larry Lacson said in the statement.

Despite the planned release, Lacson assured that NFA would maintain sufficient buffer stocks for emergencies.

The move follows the government's reduction of rice tariffs from 35 percent to 15 percent in July 2024 under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s directive.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2029391/da-mulls-nfa-rice-buffer-stock-release-amid-high-prices>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Petition vs 2025 budget a desperate political survival bid, says solon

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lalu](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLaluINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 04:31 PM January 28, 2025



President Marcos signs the P6.326-trillion national budget for 2025 in a ceremony in Malacañang on Dec. 30. (INQUIRER / MARIANNE BERMUDEZ)

MANILA, Philippines — Filing a petition before the Supreme Court (SC) that seeks to declare the 2025 national budget as unconstitutional is nothing but a desperate attempt at political survival, Deputy Majority Leader and La Union 1st District Rep. Paolo Ortega V said.

Ortega, in a statement on Tuesday called the moves taken by Davao City 3rd District Rep. Isidro Ungab, former executive secretary Vic Rodriguez, and their allies as a “calculated political gambit” that only aims to “obstruct progress and destabilize the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.”

According to Ortega, lawmakers in the House of Representatives stand firm in insisting on the legitimacy of the General Appropriations Act (GAA).

“I call on my colleagues and on the public to see this petition for what it truly is: a desperate bid for political survival disguised as a constitutional question. The House of Representatives stands firm in its defense of the 2025 national budget,” Ortega said.

“We trust the Supreme Court to exercise its judicial wisdom and dismiss this petition, as it is clearly designed to obstruct and destabilize rather than to uphold the Constitution,” he added.

Ortega also doubled down on his previous claims that the claims about the GAA’s legality are only an effort to put back the P1.3 billion funds removed by Congress from Vice President Sara Duterte’s office.

“Let us not mince words: this petition is an effort to undo the decision of Congress to cut P1.3 billion from the budget of the Office of the Vice President, a decision rooted in Congress’s constitutional duty to ensure that public funds are judiciously allocated,” Ortega noted.

“It reflects an alarming pattern of actions aimed at creating political uncertainty and diverting attention from the pressing needs of the Filipino people,” he added.

Claims that the then-proposed budget had blank provisions were raised by Ungab and former president Rodrigo Duterte.

They alleged that the budget was illegal since there were portions or line items that did not have allocations before it was approved by the House.

Last Wednesday, Ungab told the Philippine Daily Inquirer that he would [challenge the legality of the 2025 GAA before the SC](#).

Copies of the report from the bicameral conference committee — the small panel that threshed out differences in the House and Senate versions of the proposed budget — showed that the blanks were mostly with Department of Agriculture and Department of Agrarian Reform programs, like allocations for the National Irrigation Authority and the National Food Authority.

[Marikina 2nd District Rep. Stella Quimbo](#), however, said in an ambush interview on Monday that the 2025 GAA is legal, as the allocations on the then-proposed budget were already decided by the bicam members before both the House and the Senate ratified the bicam report.

Quimbo, who is the acting chairperson of the House committee on appropriations, said that technical staffers of the House and the Senate are allowed to make changes as long as they are ministerial — noting that these are mere “calculator activity.”

However, another Duterte ally in former House speaker and now Davao del Norte 1st District Rep. Pantaleon Alvarez said that the action of putting allocations in blank line items after the General Appropriations Bill (GAB) or the budget bill was approved may fall under falsification of public documents.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2028950/petition-vs-budget-nothing-but-desperate-political-survival-bid-ortega>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Solon, other petitioners ask Supreme Court to nullify 2025 GAA

By: [Tetch Torres-Tupas](#) - Reporter / [@T2TupasINO](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 04:46 PM January 28, 2025



President Ferdinand “Bongbong” R. Marcos Jr. signs the P6.326-trillion national budget for 2025 in a ceremony in Malacañang on Dec. 30, 2024 (INQUIRER / MARIANNE BERMUDEZ)

MANILA, Philippines – A petition has been filed before the Supreme Court (SC) to declare as unconstitutional Republic Act 12116 or the General Appropriations Act of 2025.

The petition, filed by Davao Representative Isidro Ungab and former executive secretary Vic Rodriguez raised several violations of the Constitution with the approval of the 2025 budget including the [supposed blank items in the bicameral conference committee report](#) of the spending plan.

The petitioners said the Bicameral Committee Report showed several blanks particularly the budget allocations for the National Irrigation Administration (NIA), Department of Agriculture and the Philippine Coconut Authority.

“Here, the Bicameral Conference Committee not only made several amendments to the 2025 General Appropriations Bill but left blanks in their report...which is very dubious and dangerous as the budgets for the said offices and programs remain to be undetermined,” read the petition.

The petitioners pointed out that while it is true that the Bicameral Conference Committee has the power to reconcile the Senate and the House of Representatives’ version, “it is prohibited from amending provisions without clearly stating the version to which it should be amended to.”

“Such irregularity is a blatant violation of the constitution which should not be condoned,” petitioners pointed out.

In this case, they said “the Bicameral Conference Committee committed grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess jurisdiction when it signed the committee report on 2025 National Budget filled with blanks.”

Another violation of the Constitution committed, according to the petitioners, is failure to provide the education sector the highest budget allocation.

Instead, they said non-education-related agencies received the highest budget allocation, particularly the infrastructure sector under the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Named as respondents in the petition were the House of Representatives headed by Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, Senate of the Philippines represented by Senate President Francis Escudero and [Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin](#).

Other petitioners are Rogelio Mendoza, Benito Ching, Redemberto Villanueva, Roseller dela Peña, Santos Catuba and Dominic Solis, being taxpayers and members of Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth).

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2028953/sc-asked-to-nullify-2025-gaa>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Egg prices are soaring in US due to bird flu

Associated Press / 11:27 PM January 28, 2025



A sign notifying a supply shortage of fresh eggs is posted in the egg section at a QFC, Monday, Jan. 27, 2025, in Seattle. (AP Photo/Lindsey Wasson)

OMAHA, Nebraska — Bird flu is forcing farmers to slaughter millions of chickens a month, pushing U.S. egg prices to more than double their cost in the summer of 2023. And it appears there may be no relief in sight, given the surge in demand as Easter approaches.

The average price per dozen nationwide hit \$4.15 in December. That's not quite as high as the \$4.82 record set two years ago, but the Agriculture Department predicts prices are going to soar another 20% this year.

Shoppers in some parts of the country are already paying more than double the average price, or worse, finding empty shelves in their local grocery stores. Organic and cage-free varieties are even more expensive.

Some grocery stores have even limited how many eggs shoppers can buy.

"It's just robbery," said Minneapolis resident Sage Mills, who bought eggs to bake a birthday cake last week. "Eggs used to be kind of a staple food for us, but now you know, you might as well just go out to eat."



## **What is driving up prices?**

The bird flu outbreak that started in 2022 is the main reason egg prices are up so much.

Anytime the virus is found on a poultry farm, the entire flock is slaughtered to help limit the virus' spread. And with massive egg farms routinely housing more than 1 million chickens, just a few infections can cause a supply crunch.

The problem tends to linger because it takes months to dispose of all the carcasses, disinfect barns and bring in new birds.

More than 145 million chickens, turkeys and other birds have been slaughtered since the current outbreak began, with the vast majority of them being egg-laying chickens.

Cage-free egg laws in 10 states may also be responsible for some supply disruptions and price increases. The laws set minimum space for chickens or cage-free requirements for egg-laying hens. They've already gone into effect in California, Massachusetts, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, Colorado and Michigan. At a Target in Chicago on Monday, a dozen large conventional eggs cost \$4.49 but a dozen large cage-free eggs were selling for \$6.19.

## **Why is the virus so hard to control?**

Bird flu is primarily spread by wild birds such as ducks and geese as they migrate. While it is fatal to a variety of animals, those species can generally carry it without getting sick, which offers the virus a chance to mutate and thrive.

The virus can be spread through droppings or any interaction between farm-raised poultry and wild birds. It's also easily tracked into a farm on someone's boots or by vehicle.

Unlike previous outbreaks, the one that began in 2022 didn't die out in high summer temperatures.

The virus found another new host when dairy cattle started getting sick last March. That creates more opportunities for the virus to linger and spread and unlike poultry, cattle aren't slaughtered when they get sick because they rarely die from bird flu.

More than five dozen people have also become ill with bird flu and one person died since last March. Nearly all of them worked around sick animals. Health officials haven't yet found evidence of the disease spreading from person to person.

### **What is being done to stop the virus?**

Farmers go to great lengths to protect their flocks.

Many poultry farms installed truck washes to disinfect vehicles entering their property and require workers to shower and change clothes before stepping inside a barn. They have also invested in duplicate sets of tools so nothing used in one barn is shared.

Some poultry farmers have even invested in lasers that shoot beams of green light in random patterns to discourage ducks and geese from landing.

Dairy farmers isolate any sick cattle and do additional testing before moving animals off the farm — especially if there has been a nearby outbreak or if the cows are being sent to a meat processing plant. The government is also testing milk.

Future vaccines might help, but it's not practical to vaccinate millions of chickens through shots, and other countries might refuse to purchase meat from vaccinated birds.

Health officials emphasize that any sick birds or cattle are kept out of the food supply. Cooking meat to 165 degrees (74 Celsius) kills bird flu, E. coli, salmonella or anything else. Pasteurization also kills the virus in milk. Raw milk is the only food product linked to illnesses so far.

### **How much has the outbreak cost so far?**

It is impossible to know how much farmers have spent to seal barns, build shower houses for workers or to adopt other biosecurity measures.

“Over the last five years, my small farm alone has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on biosecurity,” said Minnesota turkey farmer Loren Brey. “But not only that, it's the time daily that you're attending to biosecurity.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has spent at least \$1.14 billion compensating farmers for the birds they have had to kill. A similar number wasn't immediately available for how much has been spent to aid dairies.

USDA spokeswoman Shilo Weir said the department also spent more than \$576 million on its own response.

The prices of turkey, milk and chicken have also seen some pressure from bird flu.

Mike Vickers, a manager at Sentyrz Liquor & Supermarket in Minneapolis, said he can't even stock any organic, cage-free or brown eggs right now and is limited instead to selling large or jumbo eggs. He understands the pain customers are feeling.

"It's the first time in my life that I've ever had to be kind of embarrassed on what I'm selling eggs for," he said. "And it's not our fault. We're paying today \$7.45 for a dozen eggs. We're selling for \$7.59. We're making \$0.14. That's doesn't pay the bills."

<https://business.inquirer.net/503741/egg-prices-are-soaring-in-us-due-to-bird-flu>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Israeli envoy seeks expansion of agri training program in PH

By: [Perla Lena](#) -

Philippine News Agency / 10:03 AM January 28, 2025



COURTESY VISIT. Israeli Ambassador to the Philippines Ilan Fluss (left) pays a courtesy call on Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas on Jan. 24, 2025. In an interview on Monday (Jan. 27), Fluss said he wanted to expand their country's intensive training program on agriculture to reach more provinces across the Philippines. (Photo courtesy of Jerry Treñas FB)

ILOILO CITY — Israeli Ambassador to the Philippines Ilan Fluss is pushing to expand Israel's intensive agricultural training program to reach more provinces across the country.

In a media interview on Monday, Fluss emphasized Israel's expertise in growing fruit trees, vegetables, and high-value crops using scientific methods, despite not producing rice or grains. Fluss said he was happy to bring into the province their knowledge through the Agro Studies program, noting that around 700 Filipino interns have participated in their program through a partnership with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda).

The program, which lasts 11 months, immerses interns in hands-on training with farmers five days a week. One day is dedicated to academic studies and one is off day.

Fluss explained that the program aims to change the interns' mindset, introducing modern farming techniques in various areas such as fruit trees, cut flowers, and vegetables.

“They see how modern farming is done. They get expertise in different areas, fruit trees, cut flowers, vegetables. The idea is after they come back from their internship in Israel, they would introduce the best practices and knowledge to the Philippines,” he said.

To expand the initiative further, agreements have been signed with the Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Training Institute, while local governments are encouraged to send more interns.

“We want to see how we can work together and improve Philippine agriculture. That is why we are expanding the partnership,” he added.

He said interns need not necessarily be students, but they could come from projects of local government and private sector initiatives.

He also mentioned that Tesda is considering reintegration support for returning interns to help implement their proposed business plans.

Fluss attended the Dinagyang Festival Sunday and held meetings with Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas, Governor Arthur Defensor Jr., and representatives from the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry-Iloilo and West Visayas State University.

Discussions included plans to invite Iloilo’s private sector and government officials to an upcoming roadshow featuring Israeli technologies and a webinar on education technology by the end of February.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/262607/israeli-envoy-seeks-expansion-of-agri-training-program-in-ph>

## **BUSINESS WORLD:**

# **2024 farm output shrinks 2.2%**

January 29, 2025 | 12:34 am



**A farmer checks the dry soil in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. Agricultural output was affected by the El Niño in the first semester, followed by La Niña in the second half. — PHILIPPINE STAR/EDD GUMBAN**

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

THE PHILIPPINES' agricultural output contracted by a record 2.2% in 2024, as farm production continued to decline in the fourth quarter.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed the value of production in agriculture and fisheries at constant 2018 prices shrank by 2.2% to P1.73 trillion, a reversal of 0.4% growth in 2023.

The 2024 print was below the Department of Agriculture's (DA) 1-2% growth target.

The farm sector's dismal performance last year was mainly due to the contraction in the value of crops (-4.2%), livestock (-4.3%) and fishery (-1.1%) production. On the other hand, poultry output grew by 6.6%.

In the fourth quarter, the value of agricultural production contracted by 2.2% to P483.58 billion, a reversal of 0.9% growth a year earlier.

However, it marked the third successive quarter of decline, although slower than the 3.6% drop in the July-to-September period.

At current prices, the value of production in agriculture and fisheries went up by 0.4% year on year to P663.06 billion in the fourth quarter.

"The 2.2% decline in Philippine agriculture in 2024 was attributed to various challenges. El Niño in the first half and La Niña in the fourth quarter disrupted production in crops, livestock, and fisheries," University of

Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) Center for Food and Agribusiness Executive Director Marie Annette Galvez-Dacul said in a Viber message.

The country faced below-normal rainfall conditions during the first half of 2024 due to El Niño. This was followed by La Niña that brought a series of storms that wreaked havoc on several agricultural areas.

“The decline in agricultural output in 2024 is the result of the confluence of events which includes impacts of El Niño and La Niña, typhoons and flooding, and lack of technical assistance at the local level,” former Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar said in a text message.

El Niño, which started in June 2023, brought prolonged cases of low rainfall, dry spells, and drought. The state weather bureau declared its end in June 2024.

On the other hand, La Niña conditions are expected to persist until the end of the first quarter.

“The primary reason for the (contraction) was due to the damage that was reported for El Niño, the series of typhoons from La Niña, other plant and pest diseases, the volcanic eruption, and other weather systems,” DA spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa said at a media briefing.

Data from the DA showed total agricultural damage from these events reached P57.78 billion, with total volume lost at 2.18 million metric tons (MT) covering 993,823 hectares of farmland.

Federation of Free Farmers National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said the decline had been expected amid natural calamities and animal diseases that hit the farm sector.

“It points also to the lack of resiliency of the sector — slow growth during normal times, but vulnerable when calamities and disturbances arise,” he added.

## **CROPS,**

## **LIVESTOCK**

Crop output, which accounted for more than half of total agricultural production, declined 3.1% in the October-to-December period, a reversal of 0.3% growth a year ago.

For the full year, crop production shrank by 4.2%, reversing the 0.8% increase in 2023.

Former Agriculture Undersecretary Fermin D. Adriano said in a Viber message that crop production was severely affected by El Niño and La Niña.

PSA data showed that palay or unmilled rice production slipped by 0.1% in the fourth quarter from the 0.2% gain a year earlier. For 2024, palay production plunged by 5%, a reversal of 1.5% growth in 2023.

The volume of palay production declined by an annual 4.84% to a four-year low of 19.09 million MT in 2024. This was the weakest production since the 19.29 million MT logged in 2020.

In the fourth quarter, corn output slipped by 0.6%, easing from the 1.8% drop a year ago. For the full year, corn production declined by 3.2%, a reversal of 1.8% growth in 2023.

Other crops that posted double-digit declines in the fourth quarter were mongo (-48.2%), sugarcane (-23.5%) and onion (-11.1%).

PSA data showed that livestock production plunged by 6.2% in the fourth quarter, a reversal of the 2.7% increase a year earlier.

In 2024, livestock output declined by 4.3%, a reversal of 2.5% growth a year prior.

In the fourth quarter, declines were seen in hogs (-7.3%), goat (-4.1%) and cattle (-2.7%).

On the other hand, dairy production rose by 4.8%, slowing from 16.4% growth a year ago.

In a Viber message, National Federation of Hog Farmers, Inc. (NatFed) Vice-Chairman Alfred Ng said the impact of the African Swine Fever (ASF) on hog production dragged the livestock sector. Hogs accounted for 14.6% of the total livestock production.

“Many farmers sold their pig inventory before ASF hit their animals. Some have not repopulated for fear of disease recurrence, and some are waiting for the monitored vaccine trial results,” he added.

Mr. Ng said increased rains and flooding due to La Niña led to a spike in ASF cases “as viruses from shallow graves of previous pig mortalities may have resurfaced and infected the animals.”

## **FISHERIES**

Meanwhile, fishery production slumped by 2.1% in the fourth quarter, slower than the 5.3% decline a year ago. For 2024, fishery output slid by 1.1%, slower than the 6.6% drop in 2023.

For the October-to-December period, double-digit declines were seen in the production of mudcrab or *alimango* (-28.9%), cavalla or *talakitok* (-24.9%), big-eyed scad or *matangbaka* (-20.6%), Indian mackerel or *alumahan* (-20%), skipjack or *gulyasan* (-19.1%), slipmouth or *sapsap* (-17.7%), frigate tuna or *tulingan* (-17%), yellowfin tuna (15%), round scad or *galunggong* (-14.3%), seaweed (-12.7%), and squid (-12.4%).

Meanwhile, growth in production was recorded for P. Vannamei (59.4%), milkfish or *bangus* (10.9%), blue crab or *alimasag* (7.2%), threadfin or *bisugo* (4%), and bigeye tuna (0.1%),

Mr. Adriano said the decline in fishery output could also be attributed to “climate factors” and the slow development of the country’s aquaculture industry.

“The closed fishing season is a necessity, hence the need to enhance more investments in aquaculture,” Mr. Dar added.

Closed fishing seasons are declared over certain areas to help fish stocks to regenerate, as mandated by Republic Act No. 8550 or the Fisheries Code. These closures typically last for three months.

## **POULTRY**

The PSA reported that poultry output grew by 6.1% in the fourth quarter, slower than 7.8% a year earlier.

For the full year, poultry production rose by 6.6%, better than 3.8% growth in 2023.

Higher production was seen for chicken (5%), chicken egg (9.8%) and duck (0.3%), while duck eggs declined by 3.1%.



“The poultry subsector was able to grow with efforts and investments of the private sector including medium-sized companies. There was a quicker turnaround in poultry,” Mr. Dar said.

UA&P’s Ms. Dacul said growth in the poultry sector was mainly due to stronger demand and shorter production cycles.

“Poultry is still in recovery mode, so as long as they keep diseases in check, the industry will keep on expanding. But excessive imports will put a brake on this growth trend,” Mr. Montemayor said.

The agriculture sector accounts for about a tenth of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) and provides about a quarter of all jobs. The PSA is scheduled to release fourth-quarter GDP data on Jan. 30 (Thursday).

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2025/01/29/649650/2024-farm-output-shrinks-2-2/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Philippines Q4 farm output shrinks for a third straight quarter

January 28, 2025 | 10:44 am



PHILIPPINE STAR/EDD GUMBAN

MANILA – The Philippines’ agricultural output shrank for a third successive quarter in the last three months of 2024, although with lesser declines, with reduced crops, livestock and fish production, the statistics agency said on Tuesday.

Farm output contracted 2.2% in the fourth quarter, an improvement on the 3.2% and 3.6% declines of the second and third quarters, respectively. However, the continued fall does not bode well for Philippine growth.

National Economic and Development Authority Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said last week the Philippines may struggle to achieve even the lower end of its 6% to 6.5% gross domestic product (GDP) goal for 2024, due largely to a spate of typhoons that may have also impacted agriculture output.

GDP numbers for the fourth quarter and full year 2024 will be released on Jan. 30. Economists in a Reuters poll expect GDP to have expanded 5.4% in the final quarter, more than the third quarter’s 5.2% growth.

Crop output, which accounted for 58.2% of total farm production, shrank 3.1% from a year earlier, the smallest decline since the second quarter of last year, the agency said.

Similarly, the 6.2% drop in fourth quarter livestock production was less than the previous quarter’s 6.7% decline, while fisheries output contracted by 2.1% compared to a 5.0% drop in the prior quarter.

Poultry production remained in positive territory however, rising 6.1% in the fourth quarter from 5.8% growth in the previous quarter. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2025/01/28/649417/philippines-q4-farm-output-shrinks-for-a-third-straight-quarter/>

**REMATE:**

# Max SRP sa baboy target ipataw ng DA vs overpricing

January 29, 2025 08:18



MANILA, Philippines – Ipinahayag ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na pinag-aaralan nila ang posibilidad ng pagpapataw ng maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) sa baboy dahil sa pagtaas ng presyo sa mga pamilihan sa Metro Manila.

Ayon kay DA spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, bahagi ng kanilang pagsusuri ang pagtukoy ng tamang MSRP para sa baboy upang matugunan ang pagtaas ng presyo.

Binanggit din niya na ang mga mapapatunayang sangkot sa profiteering ay maaaring kasuhan batay sa Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act.

Ipinaliwanag ni De Mesa na ang markup mula sa farmgate price hanggang retail price ay dapat may maliit na dagdag lamang, na hindi lalampas ng P100. Gayunpaman, ang mga presyo sa merkado ay mas mataas.

Halimbawa, habang ang farmgate price ng baboy ay nasa PHP220 hanggang PHP250, ang presyo sa merkado ay higit sa PHP400 kada kilo.

Sa kasalukuyan, ang presyo ng pork liempo sa Metro Manila ay PHP426/kg, habang ang pork kasim ay nasa PHP330/kg hanggang PHP400/kg.

Ang mga frozen na produkto ng baboy ay mas mura, na ang liempo ay nasa PHP280-350/kg at ang kasim ay nasa PHP230-280/kg.

Ayon sa DA, kailangan pa nilang dalawang linggo upang alamin ang mga sanhi ng pagtaas ng presyo ng baboy sa kabila ng matatag na suplay ng baboy. Kasama na rin sa kanilang pagsusuri ang posibleng profiteering sa merkado. **RNT**

<https://remate.ph/max-srp-sa-baboy-target-ipataw-ng-da-vs-overpricing/>

**REMATE:**

# Food Security Emergency nakaumang sa Pebrero

January 29, 2025 07:39



MANILA, Philippines – Idedeklara ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang isang food security emergency para sa bigas sa unang linggo ng Pebrero, matapos maantala ang pagpapadala ng opisyal na resolusyon mula sa National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC).

Ayon kay DA Spokesperson Arnel de Mesa, kapag natanggap na nila ang resolusyon—inaasahang sa loob ng dalawang araw ng trabaho—magsasagawa sila ng pagsusuri, at maaaring agad na ideklara ang emergency kinabukasan. Ipinangako ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) sa isang pagdinig sa Kongreso na ipapalabas nila ang resolusyon sa lalong madaling panahon.

Sa ilalim ng food security emergency, papayagan ang National Food Authority (NFA) na magbenta ng bigas, kahit na mga bagong stock, sa mga lokal na pamahalaan (LGUs), ahensya ng gobyerno, at mga government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) sa halagang PHP 36 kada kilo.

Ibebenta naman ito sa mga mamimili sa presyong hanggang PHP 38 kada kilo.

Layunin ng hakbang na ito na magbigay ng espasyo para sa mga bagong stock ng bigas at tulungan ang mga lokal na magsasaka sa pamamagitan ng palay procurement program ng NFA para sa darating na anihan.

Nauna nang sinabi ni DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na ang pagbebenta ng NFA rice ay ilulunsad sa mga piling LGUs malapit sa mga warehouse ng NFA, na may target na paghahatid sa pagitan ng Pebrero 7 at 15.

Kasama sa mga unang makikinabang ang Metro Manila LGUs, pati na rin ang Laguna, Oriental Mindoro, at Occidental Mindoro, na maaari ring mag-supply ng bigas sa Cebu. (*Santi Celario*)

<https://remate.ph/food-security-emergency-nakaumang-sa-pebrero/>

**REMATE:**

## **DTI: Posibleng magdeklara ng food security emergency ngayong linggo**

January 28, 2025 17:30



MANILA, Philippines- Inaasahang mgdedeklara ng food security emergency ang National Price Council sa loob ng dalawang araw.

Inihayag ito ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) sa pagdinig ng Murang Pagkain Supercommittee sa Mababang Kapulungan ng Kongreso.

“Kahapon, na-finalize ‘yung version. Okay na sa lahat. Kasi it’s more of the wordings lang kasi dumadaan lang sa the usual complete stuff,” sabi ni DTI Assistant Secretary Agaton Uvero .

Iniulat ng National Food Authority sa supercommittee na sa kasalukuyan ay mayroong 761,207 bags sako ng bigas na stock sa buong bansa.

Kabuuang 300,000 sako ang lumang stock habang ang iba ay regular stock.

Sinabi ni NFA Administrator Larry Lacson na sakaling maideklara ang food security emergency, maari nang mag-unload ng stocks– ito man ay regular o lumang stocks.



Sinabi ni Lacson na ibebenta nila ang aging stocks sa halagang P29 kada kilo at ang regular na stocks ay P38 kada kilo sa iba't ibang Kadiwa stores at sa pamamagitan ng local government units.

Ang isyu ay naging paksa ng pagdinig ng Supercommittee dalawang linggo na ang nakakaraan, na nag-udyok sa ilang miyembro ng Kamara na ipahayag ang kanilang pagkadismaya na hindi pa idinedeklara ang emergency sa kabila ng mataas na presyo ng bigas. **Jocelyn Tabangcura-Domenden**

<https://remate.ph/dti-posibleng-magdeklara-ng-food-security-emergency-ngayong-linggo/>

**REMATE:**

# PH kapos sa 2024 agri output target

January 28, 2025 13:39



MANILA, Philippines- Nakapagtala ang Philippine agriculture sector ng pagbaba sa produksyon sa nakalipas na tatlong buwan ng 2024 para maihatid ang full-year figure na mababa sa target ng pamahalaan.

Ito ang makikita sa datos na ipinalabas ng Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Makikita sa PSA data ang value ng agriculture at fisheries output na bumaba ng 2.2% sa fourth quarter sa nakalipas na taon, kasunod ng 3.6% contraction sa third quarter, 3.2% ang ibinaba sa second quarter, at 0.2% expansion naman sa first quarter.

Ang mga pananim, tinatayang 58.2% ng kabuuang production value, nabawasan ng 3.1%. Ang 'biggest cuts' ay nakita sa produksyon ng mongo na bumaba ng 48.2%, tobacco ng 25.6%, sugarcane o tubo ng 23.5%, at sibuyas ng 11.1%.

Ang value ng palay o unmilled rice produced para sa taon ay bumaba ng 5.0%. nauna rito, nagtakda ang Department of Agriculture (DA) ng target production na 20.44 million metric tons (MT) ng unmilled rice for 2024.

Ang pangisdaan, na may 12.9% na produksyon, bumaba ng 2.1%.

“Double-digit drops were recorded in mudcrab (alimango) down 28.9%, cavalla (talakitok) by 24.9%, big-eyed scad (matangbaka) by 20.6%, Indian mackerel (alumahan) by 20.0%, among others,” ayon sa ulat.

“Livestock, which fell by 6.2%, accounted for 14.0% of total production. Contractions were seen in the production of hog (-7.3%), goat (-4.1%), and cattle (-2.7%). Production of carabao grew by 1.8%, and dairy by 4.8%,” dagdag pa.

Naitala para sa 12.9% ng kabuuang produksyon, ang poultry o manukan ay ang sole subsector na nakapagtala ng paglago sa quarter na may 6.1%. Ang produksyon ng manok ay lumawig ng 5.0%, chicken eggs ng 9.8%, at duck ng 0.3%. Ang produksyon ng duck eggs ay bumaba ng 3.1%.

“This brought the full-year 2024 agriculture and fisheries output down by 2.2%, below the DA’s target growth range of 1.0% to 2.0%, following the 0.4% expansion in 2023,” batay sa ulat.

Hanggang sa ngayon ay hindi pa rin makapaglabas ang ahensya ng kalatas hinggil sa pinakabagong report subalit ipinahayag ang epekto ng matinding weather conditions gaya ng El Niño, La Niña, at serye ng mga bagyo.

Para ngayong taon, nakapagtala ang DA ng ani ng palay na 20.46 million metric tons, at naglalayon na paghusayin ang logistics para sa perishable goods gaya ng gulay at prutas.

“We achieved significant progress in 2024 but 2025 demands bigger goals and stronger resolve,” ang sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. **Kris Jose**

<https://remate.ph/ph-kapos-sa-2024-agri-output-target/>

**REMATE:**

## **3M sako ng bigas ipamamahagi ng NFA sa nat'l food security emergency**

January 29, 2025 16:42



MANILA – Inihahanda ng National Food Authority (NFA) ang pamamahagi ng 150,000 metric tons (MT) ng bigas mula sa buffer stock nito sa sandaling ideklara ang isang national food security emergency, ayon sa Department of Agriculture (DA) nitong Miyerkules.

Ayon sa NFA, ipapamahagi nila ang tinatayang 3 milyong sako ng bigas na may timbang na 50 kilo bawat isa sa loob ng anim na buwan, na uunahin ang mga lugar na may mataas na presyo ng bigas. Bukod dito, nakatakdang bilhin ng ahensya ang palay sa halagang P23 kada kilo sa mga susunod na buwan, kasabay ng pagsisimula ng anihan sa kalagitnaan ng Pebrero.

Ayon kay NFA Administrator Larry Lacson, ang buwanang pagpapalabas ng 30,000 MT ng bigas ay makakatulong upang mapababa ang presyo ng bigas at mabigyang-daan ang NFA na makabili ng bagong aning palay. Alinsunod sa mandato nito, kailangang panatilihin ng NFA ang isang 15-araw na buffer stock na pangunahing nagmumula sa mga lokal na magsasaka.

Batay sa pagsubaybay ng DA, ang presyo ng bigas sa Metro Manila mula Enero 20 hanggang 25, 2025 ay nasa pagitan ng P41.65 at P59.18 kada kilo, sa kabila ng pagbaba ng taripa sa imported na bigas mula 35% hanggang 15% noong nakaraang taon.

Inaasahang idedeklara ngayong linggo ang isang pambansang emergency sa seguridad sa pagkain, matapos maantala ang inaasahang anunsyo noong Enero 22. Nauna nang inaprubahan ng National Price Coordinating Council ang isang resolusyon na humihimok sa DA na gawin ang deklarasyon dahil sa patuloy na pagtaas ng presyo ng bigas.

Noong unang bahagi ng Enero, itinakda ng DA ang maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) na P58 kada kilo para sa premium imported rice. Posibleng ibaba ito sa susunod na buwan, depende sa pandaigdigang presyo ng bigas. (*Santi Celario*)

<https://remate.ph/3m-sako-ng-bigas-ipamamahagi-ng-nfa-sa-natl-food-security-emergency/>

**REMATE:**

# Suplay ng pulang sibuyas sapat, walang taas-presyo – DA

January 29, 2025 09:23



MANILA, Philippines – Tiniyak ng Department of Agriculture (DA) sa publiko na hindi tataas ang presyo at magkakaroon ng matatag na supply ng lokal na sibuyas kasabay ng pagsisimula ng harvest season.

Ito ay matapos mag-alala ang publiko na maubos na ang stocks ng sibuyas bago mag-February 1, ayon sa Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

Ipinaliwanag ni DA spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa na ang mga sibuyas na inani noong nakaraang taon ay inaasahang tatagal hanggang Enero o Pebrero dahil sa cold storage.

Ayon sa BPI, ang stock ng lokal na sibuyas red ay nasa 8,494.99 metric tons noong Enero 17. Sinabi rin ni de Mesa na ang peak harvest season para sa sibuyas red ay mula Enero hanggang Marso, kaya't hindi dapat mag-alala sa biglaang pagtaas ng presyo.

Binanggit din ni de Mesa na kahit papalapit nang maubos ang stocks, darating na ang mga bagong aning sibuyas, kaya't hindi tataas ang presyo.

Ayon sa DA Bantay Presyo, ang presyo ng sibuyas red sa Metro Manila noong Lunes ay mula PHP100 hanggang PHP180 kada kilo. (*Santi Celario*)

<https://remate.ph/suplay-ng-pulang-sibuyas-sapat-walang-taas-presyo-da/>

**ABANTE:**

# Food security emergency ilalarga na

Abante News

- January 28, 2025



Irerekomenda na ng National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) ang deklarasyon ng food security emergency sa bansa sa loob ng dalawang araw.

Ito ang isiniwalat ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) sa hearing ng Murang Pagkain Supercommittee sa Kamara de Representantes nitong Martes.

“Kahapon, na-finalize ‘yung version. Okay na sa lahat. Kasi it’s more of the wordings lang kasi dumadaan lang sa the usual complete stuff,” wika ni DTI Assistant Secretary Agaton Uvero sa hearing.

“In two days, lalabas na ‘yan?’” tanong ni Marikina Representative Stella Quimbo na sinagot ni Uvero ng “Kaya na, Mr. Chair.”

Kinumpirma naman ng National Food Authority na mayroon silang 761,207 sako ng bigas sa buong bansa kung saan 300,000 dito ay medyo matagal nang nakaimbak sa mga warehouse.

“Pag walang calamities, wala tayong nire-release,” paliwanag ni NFA Administrator Larry Lacson kung bakit lumobo ang bilang ng nakaimbak na bigas.

“If in case ma-declare na ‘yung food security emergency, we can unload our stocks na, whether it’s regular stocks or the aging stocks,” dagdag pa niya.

Ang kalihim ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang siyang magdedeklara ng food security emergency kapag nirekomenda na ito ng NPCC.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/01/28/food-security-emergency-ilalarga-na/>



**PEOPLE'S JOURNAL:**

# Asian journal marks 20 years, navigates a changing agricultural landscape

Tuesday, January 28, 2025 [SEARCA](#)

**SEARCA** **AJAD 20th Anniversary**  
Asian Journal of Agriculture and Development

**Asian Agriculture and Development in a Dynamic and Volatile Landscape of Demands, Peoples, and Risks**

3 February 2025 | 9:30 AM (GMT+8) via Zoom

**DR. C. PETER TIMMER**  
Thomas D. Cabot Professor of Development Studies  
Emeritus, Harvard University  
Cambridge, MA, USA  
*How I Learned to Stabilize Rice Prices and Why*

**DR. V. BRUCE TOLENTINO**  
Former Monetary Board Member  
Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas  
and SEARCA Senior Fellow

**DR. ALFREDO MAHAR FRANCISCO LAGMAY**  
Executive Director  
UP Resilience Institute  
University of the Philippines  
Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines  
*An Impact-Based Flood Forecasting System for Citizen Empowerment*

**DR. SAMARENDU MOHANTY**  
Vice President, The Rice Trader  
California, USA

**SOLVE** SEARCA Online Learning and Virtual Engagements  
Highlighting actions on agricultural and rural development

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The **Asian Journal of Agriculture and Development (AJAD)**, the internationally peer-reviewed scientific journal of the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), will mark its 20th anniversary with critical insights on food security and resilience in a volatile agricultural landscape at a seminar to be held on 3 February 2025, 9:30 a.m., at the SEARCA Umali Auditorium and livestreamed via Zoom and Facebook.

Dubbed AJAD@20, the event will feature a seminar showcasing the special 20th anniversary issue titled “Asian Agriculture and Development in a Dynamic and Volatile Landscape of Demands, Peoples, and Risks.”

A distinguished lineup of national, regional, and international leaders in agricultural and rural development will gather for the celebration. SEARCA Center Director Dr. Glenn Gregorio will welcome guests, including three of his predecessors, top academicians, scientific authors, and experts from the Los Baños science community.

Notably, Dr. Arsenio Balisacan, Secretary of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and former SEARCA Center Director, will provide a historical perspective on AJAD, having played a pivotal role in its inception. AJAD Editor Dr. Cielito Habito, former NEDA Director General and Socioeconomic Planning Secretary, will officially launch the AJAD Vol. 21 20th Anniversary Issue.

Highlighting the event are two paper presentations that offer critical insights into the evolving agricultural landscape. Dr. Peter Timmer, Thomas D. Cabot Professor of Development Studies, Emeritus at Harvard University, will present his retrospective essay titled “How I Learned to Stabilize Rice Prices and Why.” The discussion will be further enriched by reactors Dr. Bruce Tolentino, SEARCA Senior Fellow and Former Monetary Board Member of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, and Dr. Samarendu Mohanty, Vice President of The Rice Trader.

Dr. Alfredo Mahar Francisco Lagmay, Executive Director of the University of the Philippines Resilience Institute, will discuss “An Impact-Based Flood Forecasting System for Citizen Empowerment,” which underscores the vital role of science-driven solutions in mitigating climate-related risks.

The event is open to the public. To join the discourse via Zoom, register at [bit.ly/48SOLVE](https://bit.ly/48SOLVE).

<https://journal.com.ph/asian-journal-marks-20-years-navigates-a-changing-agricultural-landscape/>

**PEOPLE'S JOURNAL:**

## **SEARCA chief rallies new agriculturists ahead of new PH Agri Act**

Tuesday, January 28, 2025 SEARCA



**MANILA** — Dr. Glenn Gregorio, Center Director of the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) and the 2024 Outstanding Professional of the Year in Agriculture, delivered an impassioned message to over 3,000 newly licensed agriculturists at their Oath-taking Ceremony held on 20 January 2025, at the Philippine International Convention Center. The event was hosted by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC).

Dr. Gregorio’s inspiring remarks were timely as the agriculture sector celebrated a landmark achievement just days later with the Senate’s passage of Senate Bill No. 2906, or the Philippine Agriculturists Act, on 27 January 2025. The legislation aims to elevate the standards of the agriculture profession and provide long-overdue professional recognition and support to agriculturists nationwide.

In his speech, Dr. Gregorio congratulated the newly licensed agriculturists and acknowledged their hard work and the unwavering support of their families throughout their academic and professional journey.

Referring to them as the “beta generation of agriculturists,” Dr. Gregorio emphasized their role as changemakers, innovators, and future leaders in Philippine agriculture.

“Today, you are not just licensed professionals; you are trailblazers who hold the potential to transform Philippine agriculture and address pressing challenges like climate change and food insecurity,” Dr. Gregorio remarked.

He introduced SEARCA's forward-thinking strategy embodied in its 12th Five-Year Development Plan (2025-2030) and outlined three critical actions for transforming agriculture. First is attracting youth into agriculture by promoting agriculture as a modern, dynamic, and rewarding career. Second is revolutionizing the value chain by leveraging digitalization and technology to modernize agricultural processes. And third is ensuring Inclusivity by involving marginalized groups, including women, youth, and elderly populations, in creating a sustainable and equitable agricultural system.

Dr. Gregorio challenged the new agriculturists to rise to the occasion.

“The world needs passionate, innovative, and committed agriculturists. I challenge you to lead boldly, embrace change, and drive innovation fearlessly,” he declared.

This inspiring ceremony coincides with a significant milestone for the agriculture sector. On January 27, 2025, the Senate passed the Philippine Agriculturists Act on its third and final reading with unanimous support from 23 senators. The Act establishes a regulatory framework to uphold professional standards and improve recognition and remuneration for agriculturists.

“As the agriculture profession in our country celebrates this pivotal moment, SEARCA reaffirms its commitment to support the next generation of agriculturists to help drive sustainable and inclusive agricultural development,” Dr. Gregorio said.

<https://journal.com.ph/searca-chief-rallies-new-agriculturists-ahead-of-new-ph-agri-act/>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Farm outputs shrinks anew in fourth quarter

**By Giselle P. Jordan**  
**January 29, 2025**

AGRICULTURAL output fell for a third straight quarter in the last three months of 2024, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported on Tuesday, underlining expectations that full-year economic growth likely missed the target.

The PSA will release preliminary fourth quarter and 2024 gross domestic product (GDP) growth data this Thursday. Analysts have said that while the final quarter would have improved from July-September's disappointing 5.2 percent, the growth would not have been enough to reach the government's 6.0- to 6.5-percent goal for the year.

Still, the fourth-quarter farm output contraction of 2.2 percent, was narrower than the 3.2- and 3.6-percent declines seen in the second and third quarters, PSA data showed.

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Still, the fourth-quarter farm output contraction of 2.2 percent, was narrower than the 3.2- and 3.6-percent declines seen in the second and third quarters, PSA data showed.

Livestock — 14.0 percent of overall agricultural production — contributed to P67.67 billion during the quarter. This was 6.2 percent lower compared to the same period in 2023 and was said to have been driven by a 7.3-percent drop in hog output.

Fisheries, with a 12.9-percent share, fell by 2.1 percent to P62.55 billion.

Poultry production, on the other hand, grew by 6.1 percent in October-December to P71.81 billion, with chicken output up by 5.0 percent. The sector accounted for 14.8 percent of total farm output.

For the full year, the value of agriculture and fisheries production also fell by 2.2 percent, reversing from 2023's 0.4-percent uptick.

Crops and livestock also reversed to 4.2- and 4.3 percent declines from 0.8 percent and 2.5 percent gains in 2023, while fisheries saw its contraction narrow to 1.1 percent from 6.6 percent.

Poultry, meanwhile, posted improved growth of 6.6 percent from 23.8 percent a year earlier.

The farm output contraction would have pulled down fourth quarter and full-year GDP growth. Analysts polled by The Manila Times expect an October-December showing of 5.7 percent, which if realized will lead to a 2024 average of just under 5.8 percent.

Government officials earlier held out hope of at least a 6.0-percent showing, but Cabinet officials have recently said that the 2024 goal would have been missed due in part to agricultural damage caused by a series of storms.

[https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/29/business/top-business/farm-outputs-shrinks-again-in-fourth-quarter/2045895?fbclid=IwY2xjawIHq5BleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHftjDLCNOBLgvGv76Bfq4NGfnQBXBuC-EWWY7tz9sYn9SZfEfnGxEI682g\\_aem\\_nSWm\\_ecK6dm4ZTNOcgiowQ](https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/29/business/top-business/farm-outputs-shrinks-again-in-fourth-quarter/2045895?fbclid=IwY2xjawIHq5BleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHftjDLCNOBLgvGv76Bfq4NGfnQBXBuC-EWWY7tz9sYn9SZfEfnGxEI682g_aem_nSWm_ecK6dm4ZTNOcgiowQ)

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **30K MT monthly release of rice to agencies, LGUs eyed**

Ada Pelonia

January 29, 2025



Newly delivered rice from Regions 2 and 3 is stored at a National Food Authority (NFA) warehouse in Valenzuela on Monday, January 20, 2025. The Department of Agriculture is poised to declare a food security emergency to address persistently high rice prices. The declaration would allow NFA to release 300,000 metric tons of rice from buffer stocks to stabilize prices while replenishing these reserves with locally produced rice to support Filipino farmers. However, the emergency declaration could fan rice inflation, a former central bank deputy governor has warned.

THE National Food Authority (NFA) plans to release around 30,000 metric tons (MT) of rice stocks monthly to agencies and local government units (LGUs) ahead of the food security emergency declaration.

This, as Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he aims to secure approval from the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) this week to declare a national food security emergency. Such a declaration would authorize the release of rice buffer stocks to government agencies and LGUs.

According to NFA Administrator Larry Lacson, the grains agency plans to release 150,000 MT of rice stocks, or roughly 3 million 50-kilo bags, in a span of six months. He said they would prioritize areas with evident price surges of the food staple.

“This monthly release of approximately 30,000 metric tons will alleviate high rice prices and prepare NFA warehouses for the upcoming palay procurement season,” Lacson said in a statement.

He assured the public that sufficient buffer stocks would still be maintained to address potential disasters or emergencies.

The DA said the grains agency would procure palay at P23 per kilo this coming rice harvest season, which will begin mid-February. It added that this is set to bolster supply in compliance with the amended Rice Tariffication Law (RTL).

Under the amended law, the NFA should maintain a 15-day rice buffer stock, equivalent to 555,000 MT, to meet national consumption needs.

“This plan underscores DA’s commitment to ensuring rice affordability and availability across the country amid ongoing price fluctuations and market challenges.”

The NFA earlier announced that it is seeking more funds to increase its buffer stock as mandated by the amended law.

Lacson noted that the initial allocation of P9 billion for palay procurement this year should be doubled to achieve its new buffer stocking requirement.

“We were initially allocated a budget of P9 billion for buffer stocking this year, based on the 9-day requirement,” he said.

“But the additional 6 days will necessitate an extra P9 billion for palay procurement, considering that our palay price procurement per kilo increased in 2024.”

Image credits: [Nonoy Lacza](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/29/30k-mt-monthly-release-of-rice-to-agencies-igus-eyed/>



## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **PHL exporters of ‘bagoong’ lose P53.6 million in export revenues since US imposed import ban—DTI-EMB data**

Andrea E. San Juan  
January 29, 2025

PHILIPPINE exporters of bagoong or shrimp paste have lost P53.62 million in export revenues to the United States in just the span of one year after the US imposed a ban on shrimps that allegedly involve turtles in harvesting shrimp, data processed by the Department of Trade and Industry—Export Marketing Bureau (DTI-EMB) showed.

“In the US, we cannot currently export shrimp paste since we need to prove that there are no turtles that are accidentally caught when we harvest shrimp,” DTI-EMB Director Bianca Pearl R. Sykimte told the BusinessMirror in a Viber message recently

Data provided to the BusinessMirror which was processed by DTI-EMB and obtained from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that shrimp paste exports earnings to the US plummeted to \$282,490 or P16.52 million in the January to November 2024 period.

This is 76.45 percent lower than the \$1.19 million or P70.13 million export revenues from shrimp paste in the same period in 2023.

This developed nearly a year after the DTI-EMB published on their website an advisory saying the US prohibits importation of shrimp and shrimp products from the Philippines.

“Wild-caught shrimp harvested in the Philippines, or products from that shrimp, for example “bagoong”, is prohibited from importation into the United States pursuant to Section 609 of U.S. Public Law 101-162,” the advisory published on the DTI-EMB’s website in February 2024 noted.

The said provision in the US law has prohibited the importation of shrimp caught using commercial fishing technology that adversely affects turtles (the use of Turtle Excluder Devices).

With this, Philippine exporters of shrimp paste or other shrimp products have been advised not to ship to the US to avoid shipments being held by the US Customs and Border Protection (CPB) until the issue is resolved.

Data processed by the DTI's export marketing arm showed that among the three types of shrimp paste products being exported to the US, shrimp paste not placed in an airtight container amounted to zero export earnings in 2024 compared to the \$85,750 earned in export revenues in the 11-month period in 2023.

Meanwhile, other types of shrimp paste products saw significant declines with export earnings from shrimp paste (with blachan) declining by 54.35 percent to \$216,440 in 2024 from the \$474,199 revenues in 2023.

The other type of shrimp paste, which is labeled as "other" shrimp paste saw a decline of 89.67 percent to \$66,050 in 2024 from the \$639,627 in 2023.

However, it can be gleaned from the data provided by the DTI-EMB that apart from the US, there are other markets which the Philippines exports bagoong to such as South Korea, Canada, Netherlands, Japan, Guam, Singapore, and Australia, among others.

Under the category of shrimp paste with blachan, South Korea is the Philippines' largest export market. Revenues from shipments of bagoong of this particular type to South Korea increased by 2.12 percent to \$577,108 in 2024 compared to the export earnings of \$565,121 in 2023.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/29/phl-exporters-of-bagoong-lose-p53-6-million-in-export-revenues-since-us-imposed-import-ban-dti-emb-data/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **Export receipts from tobacco fall in 2024— NTA**

Ada Pelonia  
January 29, 2025

The country's unmanufactured tobacco exports shrank by 14.2 percent in 2024, according to the National Tobacco Administration (NTA).

Data from the NTA showed that exports of unmanufactured tobacco stood at 17.8 million kilograms last year from 20.75 million kilograms recorded in 2023.

The value of exports dropped by 6.47 percent to \$94.59 million in 2024 from \$101.13 million in the previous year.

NTA data also showed that Universal Leaf Philippines, Inc. (ULPI) emerged as the top exporter of unmanufactured tobacco last year with a total volume of 14.14 million kilograms worth \$111.97 million. JTI Asia Manufacturing Corp. trailed behind with 1.89 million kilograms at \$3.12 million.

This was followed by Continental Leaf Tobacco Philippines Inc. with an export volume of 747,210 kilograms (kg) worth \$3.9 million, Trans Manila Inc. (TMI) with 636,120 kg worth \$1.85 million, and PMFTC Inc. with 315,026 kg worth \$795,761.

Meanwhile, NTA data showed imports of unmanufactured tobacco plunged by 39.89 percent to 30.59 million kilos in 2024 from 50.88 million kilos in the previous year.

The value of imports also plummeted by 49.51 percent to \$115.87 million from \$229.47 million recorded in 2023.

The agency said over half of the imported unmanufactured tobacco is used for local cigarette manufacturing, 39 percent is for export as cigarettes, and the remaining 4 percent is for export as processed leaf.

## **Output**

NTA Deputy Administrator for Operations Nestor Casela said tobacco production last year grew by 7.46 percent to 45.40 million kg from 42.25 million kg in 2023.

“Philippine tobacco became competitive in international markets,” Casela told reporters on the sidelines of the International Tobacco Summit in Quezon City last Monday.

He said that this was spurred by China, the world’s leading tobacco producer, which reduced its production, which caused global supply to tighten.

In his presentation, Casela noted that international prices rose, which made the Philippines “very competitive in price and quality.”

“Due to the interplay of demand and supply, there was a great demand for tobacco last year [since] China reduced its production of tobacco, that’s why our Philippine tobacco became competitive and resulted in much higher prices.”

He said the average buying price of local leaf tobacco stood at P129 per kilo in 2024.

Furthermore, Casela noted that the increase in output was also caused by local government units (LGUs) prompting farmers to plant more, given the incentive stipulated under the Republic Act (RA) 7171.

“The local government units are so motivated in convincing their farmers to plant more because it means that if there’s bigger volume they produce, their share from the [law] is higher,” he said.

Under the law, 15 percent of the collection from excise taxes on locally manufactured Virginia type of cigarettes will be allocated to the beneficiary provinces pro rata according to the volume of production.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/29/export-receipts-from-tobacco-fall-in-2024-nta/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# Manila halts testing of porcine PAP from ASF-hit nations

Ada Pelonia  
January 29, 2025

The Department of Agriculture (DA) suspended the testing of porcine processed animal protein (PPAP) from countries affected by African swine fever (ASF).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. signed Memorandum Order (MO) 5, which authorized the moratorium on the testing of PPAP coming from ASF-affected nations at the country's ports of entry.

The DA noted that since 2023, all PPAP samples sourced from ASF-affected countries tested by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) for the ASF virus had negative results.

“Based on the policy review using information from recent inspection missions and a more detailed risk assessment conducted by BAI on the entry of ASF from PPAP sourced from ASF-affected countries, the probability of occurrence is moderate while the consequence assessment is low,” the order read.

The agency said PPAP would undergo extreme temperatures that would be sufficient to inactivate the ASF virus in animal by-products used for production.

It added that the duration of storage in the country of origin, which is typically from European and South American nations, and the over 30-day transport period to the Philippines “satisfies the recommended ‘quarantine period’ for feeds.”

“Based on scientific studies, prolonged storage or feed quarantine can potentially prevent viral spread as it allows virus to naturally decay, thereby reducing infective viral load within the feed over time.”

Under the order, a moratorium on the testing of PPAP from ASF-affected nations will be issued provided that certain measures are followed.

This includes export health certificates of PPAP certifying that the raw material is sourced from animal by-products fit for human consumption and has been processed at temperature and time duration in line with internationally acceptable standards.

It should also attest that animal by-products used for PPAP production are sourced from animals free from any transboundary and infectious animal diseases and that rendering plants regularly comply with GMP and/or HACCP certification bodies.

“All other procedures relative to the inspection of shipments prior to clearance at the ports of entry shall be followed.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/29/manila-halts-testing-of-porcine-pap-from-asf-hit-nations/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **Bill creating regulatory body for agriculturists hurdles Senate**

Butch Fernandez  
January 29, 2025

The Senate passed on third and final reading last January 27 a measure which is expected to raise the standard of the agriculture profession through the creation of a regulatory body for agriculturists.

Senate Bill No. (SBN) 2906, or the Philippine Agriculturists Act, sponsored by Sen. Juan Miquel “Migz” F. Zubiri, got the nod of all 23 senators present. Sen. Ramon Bong Revilla principally authored the bill, which seeks to establish “a more relevant and responsive legal regulatory framework” for the agriculture profession.

“This is one of our happy bills, and as testament to that, all weekend we have been receiving messages of gratitude from our stakeholders on social media—thanking us for spearheading this measure and ensuring that our agriculturists are given the professional recognition and remuneration that they deserve,” Zubiri said.

Revilla thanked Zubiri for shepherding SBN 2906, as well as his colleagues for their support for its timely approval.

“Our vote of yes is a vote for the whole agriculture sector on which many of the rights of our countrymen depend,” the senator said.

“Registered agriculturists are the backbone of the sector and they are responsible in propelling our joint aspirations for a better future for our farmers, their community and the country as whole. Through this measure, it is our hope that it will fill the void between scientific research and development and traditional farming practices.”

The Philippine Agriculturists Act is expected to elevate the standards of the agriculture profession through the creation of the Professional Regulatory Board of Agriculture under the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC).

The board will consist of a chairperson and five members, each representing key fields: crop science, animal science, soil science, crop protection, agricultural economics/business/entrepreneurship, and agricultural extension and communication.

It will be mandated to supervise and regulate the licensure, registration, and practice of registered agriculturists, as well as assess conditions affecting agricultural practice to enhance the profession.

Both Zubiri and Revilla are proposing a registration of agriculturists without examination for graduates with a bachelor's degree in Agriculture from a government-recognized school; postgraduate Agriculture degree holders; those with at least five years of experience in the agriculture sector, whether in government or private practice.

The measure also seeks to allow only registered agriculturists to use the title "Registered Agriculturist (R. Agr)" with a minimum base salary employed in government or state universities and colleges not below Salary Grade 13.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/29/bill-creating-regulatory-body-for-agriculturists-hurdles-senate/>



## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **PHL seen completing field trials for bird flu vaccines in March**

Ada Pelonia and Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz  
January 29, 2025

The long-awaited bird flu vaccines are expected to hurdle field trials by the end of March this year, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the trial results for avian influenza (AI) vaccines would be presented to the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) through the Veterinary Technical Advisory Committee (VTAC), which would then be endorsed to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

“By the end of this quarter, the two trials would be concluded and then the application for approval will be sent to the FDA,” de Mesa told reporters in a briefing on Tuesday.

He noted that the vaccines undergoing field trials came from companies in Hungary and Germany.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier hinted that the vaccine for AI could become available by March.

“If that comes out in March, we will have to [allot] P300 million for that,” Laurel said in a previous interview, adding that this amount would be sufficient to procure 30 million doses.

The agriculture chief noted that the agency would prioritize the inoculation of layers against the disease.

Industry groups have been lobbying for bird flu vaccines given their international availability which were proven effective against the transboundary animal disease.

BAI report showed that no positive cases of AI have been reported from January 4 to January 24 this year.

ASF vaccine

Meanwhile, de Mesa noted that over 32,000 doses of the African swine fever (ASF) vaccine had been administered to 18 farms under controlled use, with more applicants under evaluation for eligibility.

“The 18 farms are in 11 municipalities in 5 provinces. There are still a number of applicants that are undergoing evaluation for eligibility.”

He said 160,000 doses of ASF vaccine had been delivered to the BAI.

Laurel said vaccines against the hog disease could be commercially available by March, with the agency distributing 150,000 doses. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/12/18/asf-vaccines-ready-for-commercial-use-by-march-2025-da/>)

“If the 150,000 doses are used up, there will be mass trial results. Hopefully, we can start (its) commercial use possibly by March [2025].”

Laurel also said the government has procured 490,000 doses, which will arrive on a staggered basis until the first half of the year.

The agency started the government-controlled inoculation of the ASF vaccine in Lobo, Batangas last August 2024.

Data from the BAI showed that 133 barangays in 34 municipalities have active ASF cases as of January 10.

‘Accelerate distribution’

Camarines Sur Rep. LRay Villafuerte called on DA to accelerate and expand its distribution of free ASF vaccines to backyard hog raisers to hasten the repopulation of local swine and drive down pork prices.

“All being well, consumers can look forward to significantly higher local pork output and cheaper retail prices in the market afterwards before the year is over with the government’s rollout at last of free anti-ASF vaccines for the hogs of small or backyard raisers,” he said.

“We are hoping that the DA, through its BAI [Bureau of Animal Industry], will accelerate its free vaccine rollout and expand the number of beneficiary hog raisers so the higher domestic pork supply and cheaper retail cost of liempo, kasim, and other pork products can happen sooner than later this year.”

He urged the DA, through BAI, to intensify the vaccine distribution and extend coverage to more backyard hog raisers, who account for 70 percent to 80 percent of the country's pork supply.

Villafuerte acknowledged the DA's repopulation efforts but noted that many hog raisers had been reluctant to reinvest in their farms due to the absence of an official vaccination program to combat ASF, which has affected over 5,826 barangays across 1,007 municipalities in 75 provinces over the past six years.

According to BAI data as of January 10, ASF cases were reported in 34 municipalities across 11 provinces, with North Cotabato (86 cases), Kalinga (15 cases), and Bohol (8 cases) being the most affected.

The Philippines is ranked as the world's tenth-largest pork consumer, eighth-largest producer, and seventh-largest importer.

According to the DA's Bantay Presyo monitoring report, the per-kilo cost of pork liempo and kasim ranged from P370 to P450 and P330 to P400, respectively, in mid-January, from P310 to P400 and P270 to P360 in October 2024.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/29/phl-seen-completing-field-trials-for-bird-flu-vaccines-in-march/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **Egg prices are soaring. Don't expect that to change anytime soon**

BusinessMirror  
January 29, 2025

Omaha, Nebraska—Bird flu is forcing farmers to slaughter millions of chickens a month, pushing US egg prices to more than double their cost in the summer of 2023. And it appears there may be no relief in sight, given the surge in demand as Easter approaches.

The average price per dozen nationwide hit \$4.15 in December. That's not quite as high as the \$4.82 record set two years ago, but the Agriculture Department predicts prices are going to soar another 20 percent this year.

Shoppers in some parts of the country are already paying more than double the average price, or worse, finding empty shelves in their local grocery stores. Organic and cage-free varieties are even more expensive.

Some grocery stores have even limited how many eggs shoppers can buy.

“It's just robbery,” said Minneapolis resident Sage Mills, who bought eggs to bake a birthday cake last week. “Eggs used to be kind of a staple food for us, but now you know, you might as well just go out to eat.”

What is driving up prices?

The bird flu outbreak that started in 2022 is the main reason egg prices are up so much.

Anytime the virus is found on a poultry farm, the entire flock is slaughtered to help limit the virus' spread. And with massive egg farms routinely housing more than 1 million chickens, just a few infections can cause a supply crunch.

The problem tends to linger because it takes months to dispose of all the carcasses, disinfect barns and bring in new birds.

More than 145 million chickens, turkeys and other birds have been slaughtered since the current outbreak began, with the vast majority of them being egg-laying chickens.

Cage-free egg laws in 10 states may also be responsible for some supply disruptions and price increases. The laws set minimum space for chickens or cage-free requirements for egg-laying hens. They've already gone into effect in California, Massachusetts, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, Colorado and Michigan. At a Target in Chicago on Monday, a dozen large conventional eggs cost \$4.49 but a dozen large cage-free eggs were selling for \$6.19.

Why is the virus so hard to control?

Bird flu is primarily spread by wild birds such as ducks and geese as they migrate. While it is fatal to a variety of animals, those species can generally carry it without getting sick, which offers the virus a chance to mutate and thrive.

The virus can be spread through droppings or any interaction between farm-raised poultry and wild birds. It's also easily tracked into a farm on someone's boots or by vehicle.

Unlike previous outbreaks, the one that began in 2022 didn't die out in high summer temperatures.

The virus found another new host when dairy cattle started getting sick last March. That creates more opportunities for the virus to linger and spread and unlike poultry, cattle aren't slaughtered when they get sick because they rarely die from bird flu.

More than five dozen people have also become ill with bird flu and one person died since last March. Nearly all of them worked around sick animals. Health officials haven't yet found evidence of the disease spreading from person to person.

What is being done to stop the virus?

Farmers go to great lengths to protect their flocks.

Many poultry farms installed truck washes to disinfect vehicles entering their property and require workers to shower and change clothes before stepping inside a barn. They have also invested in duplicate sets of tools so nothing used in one barn is shared.

Some poultry farmers have even invested in lasers that shoot beams of green light in random patterns to discourage ducks and geese from landing.

Dairy farmers isolate any sick cattle and do additional testing before moving animals off the farm — especially if there has been a nearby outbreak or if the cows are being sent to a meat processing plant. The government is also testing milk.

Future vaccines might help, but it's not practical to vaccinate millions of chickens through shots, and other countries might refuse to purchase meat from vaccinated birds.

Health officials emphasize that any sick birds or cattle are kept out of the food supply. Cooking meat to 165 degrees (74 Celsius) kills bird flu, E. coli, salmonella or anything else. Pasteurization also kills the virus in milk. Raw milk is the only food product linked to illnesses so far.

How much has the outbreak cost so far?

It is impossible to know how much farmers have spent to seal barns, build shower houses for workers or to adopt other biosecurity measures.

“Over the last five years, my small farm alone has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on biosecurity,” said Minnesota turkey farmer Loren Brey. “But not only that, it's the time daily that you're attending to biosecurity.”

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has spent at least \$1.14 billion compensating farmers for the birds they have had to kill. A similar number wasn't immediately available for how much has been spent to aid dairies.

USDA spokeswoman Shilo Weir said the department also spent more than \$576 million on its own response.

The prices of turkey, milk and chicken have also seen some pressure from bird flu.

Mike Vickers, a manager at Sentyrz Liquor & Supermarket in Minneapolis, said he can't even stock any organic, cage-free or brown eggs right now and is limited instead to selling large or jumbo eggs. He understands the pain customers are feeling.

“It's the first time in my life that I've ever had to be kind of embarrassed on what I'm selling eggs for,” he said. “And it's not our fault. We're paying today \$7.45 for a dozen eggs. We're selling for \$7.59. We're making \$0.14. That's doesn't pay the bills.” *AP*

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/29/egg-prices-are-soaring-dont-expect-that-to-change-anytime-soon/>

**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:**

# Food emergency sa bigas, simula na sa Pebrero - DA

Angie dela Cruz, Ludy Bermudo  
January 29, 2025 | 12:00am



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

**The STAR / Michael Varcas**

MANILA, Philippines — Takdang ideklara ng Department of Agriculture (DA) sa unang linggo ng Pebrero ang National Food Emergency sa bigas sa bansa.

Ito ay makaraang ihayag ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) sa Kamara na aprubado na at kaya nang ilabas ng National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) sa loob ng dalawang araw ang resolusyon para sa national food emergency.

Ayon kay DTI Secretary Agaton Uvero, may inaayos lang na formula para masuportahan ang food emergency at kaya na umanong ideklara sa susunod na dalawang araw.

Sinabi naman ni DA Spokesperson Asec. Arnel de Mesa, sa oras na makarating na sa DA ang kopya ng resolusyon, rerebyuhin lang nila ito sa loob ng dalawang araw at agad ding idedeklara ang National Food Emergency.

Anyang, handa naman ang National Food Authority (NFA) na mag-release ng stocks gayundin ang mga LGU na nagsasapinal na rin ng kanya-kanyang guidelines para sa pagbebenta ng bigas.

Sa ilalim ng inamyendahang Rice Tariffication Law, maaaring magdeklara ng food security emergency ang kalihim ng agrikultura dahil sa kakulangan ng suplay o hindi pangkaraniwang pagtaas ng presyo.

Sa ilalim ng food security emergency, bibigyang pahintulot ang pagbebenta ng NFA rice stocks sa mga LGU.

[https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2025/01/29/2417600/food-emergency-sa-big-as-simula-na-sa-pebrero-da?fbclid=IwY2xjawIHq4tleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHQdT5dKzUnsxfRYms\\_QIZwrCQ88jaIfL0U-bpDO\\_VSp1hjH3LrYpXLd0Lw\\_aem\\_hbkdMBYtINOC69TL2U9itg](https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2025/01/29/2417600/food-emergency-sa-big-as-simula-na-sa-pebrero-da?fbclid=IwY2xjawIHq4tleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHQdT5dKzUnsxfRYms_QIZwrCQ88jaIfL0U-bpDO_VSp1hjH3LrYpXLd0Lw_aem_hbkdMBYtINOC69TL2U9itg)