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MANILA BULLETIN:

Selling ₱60/kilo imported rice deemed profiteering—DA chief

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

Jan 6, 2025 10:41 AM



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

Rice retailers charging ₱60 per kilo for imported rice are engaging in profiteering which is a violation of consumer protection laws, Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco “Tiu” Laurel Jr. said on Monday, Jan. 6.

“Malinaw sa akin na dapat wala nang ₱60 rice na imported sa merkado (It is clear to me that there should no longer be ₱60 imported rice in the market),” he said after the flag raising ceremony at DA Central Office in Quezon City.

“Ang ₱60 na imported rice is already profiteering, in my opinion (The ₱60 imported rice is already profiteering, in my opinion).”

Earlier, Laurel stated that after conducting several market visits, they found sufficient evidence to suggest that some retailers and traders were deliberately misleading Filipino consumers by using branded imports to artificially inflate rice prices.

As part of the solution, he ordered removing brand labels from imported rice.

The DA chief also directed the removal of labels such as “premium” and “special” from imported rice, saying these are being misused to inflate prices.

Data from the agriculture department indicates that a reasonable markup for imported rice is ₱6 to ₱8 per kilo over its landed cost to ensure sustainable profits. For example, rice imported from Vietnam at an all-in cost of ₱40 per kilo should retail for no more than ₱48 per kilo.

To address fluctuating rice prices, Laurel said he is exploring the possibility of declaring a food security emergency under the amended Rice Tariffication Law. This move would allow the National Food Authority (NFA) to release buffer stocks and stabilize market prices.

Maximum suggested retail price

In addition, the DA chief revealed that the agency will soon release a “maximum suggested retail price system.”

“We are now trying to establish ano ba ang dapat na maximum suggested retail price (We are now working to determine what the appropriate maximum suggested retail price should be),” said Laurel.

“We will be coming up with the maximum suggested retail price system very soon. Before the end of January, sana malabas ko na (I hope to release it before the end of January),” he added.

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To finalize the MSRP, Laurel said the DA will convene with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

Affordable rice varieties

Laurel also called on rice importers to help lower rice prices by prioritizing imports of more affordable varieties, particularly those with 25 percent broken grain content, as part of efforts to address food inflation.

“By importing more rice with 25 percent broken grains, we can significantly increase the availability of affordable rice options for Filipino consumers,” Laurel said during a meeting with rice importers to discuss strategies for stabilizing prices on Friday, Jan. 3.

The DA chief emphasized the role of the private sector in ensuring the success of the Marcos administration’s Kadiwa ng Pangulo Rice-for-All program, which has been offering well-milled rice at ₱40 and ₱45 per kilo through rolling stores, kiosks, and centers in Metro Manila and Bulacan since Dec. 21, 2024.

“We remain hopeful that more like-minded businesses will join President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s administration in addressing food inflation and ensuring affordability for Filipino consumers,” he added.

Currently, 26 Kadiwa rolling stores and kiosks are operational in Metro Manila, with plans to expand to all major public markets in the National Capital Region.

The DA added that 40 Kadiwa Centers are also providing basic necessities and low-priced rice to vulnerable sectors.

Meanwhile, Laurel lauded Police Major General Edgar Alan Okubo, acting chief of the PNP Directorial Staff, for securing the smooth operations of these initiatives, which have brought affordable rice closer to the public.

While focusing on lowering consumer prices, Laurel reiterated the agency’s commitment to supporting Filipino rice farmers.

“The DA is working closely with millers and importers to bring more affordable rice options, but we remain dedicated to helping Filipino rice farmers increase their productivity and maintain their profitability,” he said.

RCEF extension

Meanwhile, state-run Landbank has distributed ₱2.89 billion in loans to over 65,000 rice farmers and cooperatives nationwide under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) from 2019 to 2024.

The bank’s announcement follows the recent passage of Republic Act (RA) No. 11954, which extends RCEF for another seven years. The amendment to the Rice Tariffication Law aims to

sustain initiatives that strengthen the productivity and resilience of Filipino rice farmers amid challenges in the agricultural sector.

According to Landbank, the loans were channeled through the Expanded Rice Credit Assistance under RCEF (ERCA-RCEF) and supported key activities such as palay production, post-harvest processing, milling, trading, and the acquisition of farm equipment.

It noted that the program benefited 17,767 individual farmers and 270 cooperatives with more than 47,100 members, with 98 percent of direct borrowers being individual rice farmers.

“Landbank fully supports the RCEF extension as part of our commitment to empowering Filipino rice farmers and boosting agricultural competitiveness,” Landbank President and CEO Lynette V. Ortiz said in a statement.

“We are prepared to sustain our efforts to enhance food security and ensure the sustainability of the rice sector.”

As the largest credit provider to the agriculture sector, Landbank reported that as of October 2024, it has extended ₱769.68 billion in loans to agriculture, fisheries, and rural development under Republic Act No. 11901 or the Agriculture, Fisheries, and Rural Development Financing Enhancement Act of 2022. This represents 55.5 percent of its ₱1.387 trillion gross loan portfolio. The bank said it has also provided financial support to 3.93 million small farmers and fishers nationwide through loans and other interventions aimed at driving countryside development.

The RCEF extension allows Landbank to sustain the delivery of low-interest credit assistance to individual farmers and cooperatives in rice-producing provinces, helping address challenges in the rice supply chain and promote modernization in the sector.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/6/selling-60-kilo-imported-rice-deemed-profiteering>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA urges importers to boost supply of affordable rice varieties

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

Jan 6, 2025 10:38 AM



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<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/6/boost-supply-of-affordable-varieties>

MANILA BULLETIN:

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BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

Jan 6, 2025 02:03 PM



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The RCEF extension, per Landbank, allows them to sustain the delivery of low-interest credit assistance to individual farmers and cooperatives in rice-producing provinces, helping address challenges in the rice supply chain and promote modernization in the sector.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/6/landbank-disburses-2-9-b-to-65-000-rice-farmers-backs-rcef-extension>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Government discovers farmer/consumer-friendly technology

Prospects of more affordable rice loom large

BY [MANILA BULLETIN](#)

Jan 6, 2025 12:36 PM

Rice, that great equalizer in many parts of the world. And for Filipinos the soul of our being. The essence of what makes the Pinoy both a unique denizen and a citizen of this great archipelago.



This is because in our country, rice is more than just a staple—it is woven into the very fabric of Filipino culture both nourishing his stomach and fueling her enterprise.

For Filipinos, no table is complete without a nice warm serving of rice. From the simplest family dinner to the grandest of fiesta celebrations, rice is ever-present.

It is also transformed into a myriad of dishes that showcase the country's rich culinary heritage, which is why the price of rice lies at the very top of every administration's economic development agenda.

When he assumed office in 2022, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. Inherited a regime of inflationary prices in basic commodities -- including rice -- which were caused by a still prevailing upward trend in commodities worldwide.



In his desire for the country to attain food security and keep the prices of agricultural products to a bare minimum, President Marcos, during his early months in Malacanang, assumed the agriculture portfolio knowing fully well that the intransigent price of rice is just a microcosm of what bedevils the agriculture sector.

These ills include development neglect, climate change, rural strife, and even educational trends.

In [his third State of the Nation Address](#) (SONA) on July 22, 2024, the President acknowledged the dire need to further lower the prevailing price of rice, despite the gradual decline already achieved through several government interventions.

"Bagamat maganda ang mga istatistikang ito [rice prices going down incrementally], wala itong kabuluhan sa ating kababayan na hinaharap ang reyalidad na mataas ang presyo ng mga bilingin, lalo na ang pagkain—lalo't higit, ng bigas," the President said in his SONA.

"Totoo, puwersa ng merkado—sa ating bansa at maging sa buong daigdig—ang siyang nagdidikta ng presyo. Bunsod ito, halimbawa, ng giyera, problema sa supply, at puwersa ng kalikasan, tulad ng El Niño na naranasan din sa ibang bansa. Subalit hindi na ito mahalagang alalahanin ng ating mga kababayang nabibigatan sa presyo ng bigas," he added.

The President then reiterated that his administration recognizes the country's rice problem. He underscored the fact that government is doing something about it, saying: "Mahal kong mga kababayan, alam kong damang-dama ninyo ito. Hindi natin winawalang-bahala ang inyong mga hinaing at hirap na dinaranas."

The Marcos administration has been implementing various projects and programs to bring rice prices down and ensure there is enough supply for everyone, even in lean times.

The President tasked different government agencies to help ensure steady and bountiful supply of palay to meet the year-round high demand for reasonably priced rice.

Now that he assigned the sector to a technocrat and expert, President Marcos' standing edict to all agencies under the economic and agriculture cluster is to work tirelessly until the price of rice stabilizes at an affordable level.

Harnessing technology for more bountiful palay harvest

And one of the first to answer the President's challenge is the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) which has developed various technologies that could enhance both the quality and quantity of palay and improve rice productivity and sustainability in the process.

A notable example is the Palatak Palay Seeder that the agency [launched in Oriental Mindoro](#) in November 2024 as part of the DOST's larger goal of building smart and sustainable cities in the MIMAROPA region.

The Palatak Palay Seeder was originally developed by homegrown inventor Engr. Delfin Cuevas, Jr., a native of Oriental Mindoro who worked over three decades abroad.

Back home for good, Engr. Cuevas used his expertise in electronics and automation to create what he initially called "6-row Multi-Grain Precision Seeder with Fertilizer Applicator"—a machine that could mechanize farming and make it easier, faster, and more precise.

Engr. Cuevas built the prototype of his machine from scratch using a 3D printer but did not know how to commercialize it so that other farmers could use it, too.

Then, upon the advice of his brother, Engr. Cuevas sought the help of the DOST to patent his invention and, ultimately, roll it out to Filipino farmers.

DOST-MIMAROPA, through the agency's Intellectual Property Rights Application Program under the Technology Application and Promotion Institute, helped the humble engineer patent his invention as part of DOST's thrust to safeguard local technologies.

Additionally, the DOST extended technical and financial assistance to Engr. Cuevas to help him scale up his creation.

"Sinimulan ko ang proyektong ito tatlong taon na ang nakalipas, at ito ay nagkaroon ng magandang epekto sa ating mga magsasaka dito," said Engr. Cuevas as he recalled his invention's humble beginning.

"Pino-promote din nila ang produktong Palatak Palay Seeder. Ito ay naging isang konsepto at tinulungan ako ng Kagawaran ng Agham at Teknolohiya (DOST) mula sa patent. Laking pasasalamat ko sa kanila dahil sila ang naging gulugod ko, sila ang naging gabay ko sa lahat ng pag-unlad ng aking produkto," Cuevas added.

Thus, the Palatak Palay Seeder was officially born. It's a modern farming implement specifically designed to streamline rice direct seeding, which is generally a labor-intensive and time-consuming process.

This innovation mechanizes seeding, reduces labor requirements, and supports sustainable rice farming while offering farmers in Oriental Mindoro potential savings of up to ₱9,000 per hectare.

The DOST proved the worthiness of the state-of-the-art technology in September 2024, when the [palay planted using the Palatak Palay Seeder](#) was harvested at a DOST demo farm in Malalad, Calapan City.

This demonstration was part of the DOST's broader "Smart and Sustainable Rice Farming Solutions" project in Oriental Mindoro, which is under the agency's Smart and Sustainable Communities Program.

Its overarching goal is to introduce local farmers in Calapan to seeder technology as an alternative to conventional, labor-intensive rice farming practices.

During the demonstration, partially germinated seeds were directly planted onto the 1,200 square meter demo site on June 1, 2024. After three months, the site produced a bountiful harvest: 20 bags of palay seeds, with each bag weighing 60 kilograms.

The yield was even greater than initially anticipated by the farmers who took part in the demonstration, as they estimated a total harvest of around 12 bags only.

"Ang tantya ko ay mga 12 na sako lang dahil maliit lang 'yung lupa," says Roberto Tumala, who was one of the farmers onsite. "Panalo ang harvest, ita-try ko ang Palatak," he said.

Everybody wins

Indeed, farmers who use the Palatak Palay Seeder stand to gain considerable benefits.

The most notable of these benefits, as the demonstration in Malalad, Calapan City showed, is a pronounced increase in rice productivity as the high-tech feeder is used to plant partially germinated seeds directly into the soil, which results in a bountiful harvest.

Another major benefit in implementing this innovation to rice farming is the significant reduction in labor costs as labor-intensive tasks – like planting palay in the rice field, in particular – are streamlined, mechanized, and simplified.

By increasing palay yield and slashing farming-related expenses, rice farmers can next look forward to bigger earnings and, potentially, a better life ahead.

As a bonus, the amount of work they will have to devote to farming will be reduced as well, giving them more time to rest and get family time.

"Ang Palatak Seeder ay malaking tulong sa mga gastos ng mga magsasaka. Dahil karaniwan, ang ginagawa nila para sa pagtatanim sa araw na iyon, ngayon, ay nagkakahalaga ng P10,000," Engr. Cuevas explained.

“Dito, sa Palatak Palay Seeder, dalawa lang ang ginagamit namin na nagpapalitan, na ang minimum dito sa aming lugar, P500 bawat isa. Kaya, ang gastos namin dito ay P1,000 bawat ektarya. Kung ikukumpara sa Taloc, na para sa transplanting, ang minimum doon ay P10,000 bawat ektarya. Ang tagal nun,” he added.

Rolly Santiago, a farmer now benefiting from the Palatak Palay Seeder, is endorsing the innovation for these very reasons, claiming: “Napakahirap magtanim, lalo na noon, sa hapon na nalalantad ka sa init at sa hapon ay 150 na lang ang makukuha mo, parang tapos na talaga. Talagang mahirap para sa mga miyembro ng pamilya,” he said.

“Nais kong hikayatin kayong gumamit ng Palatak Palay Seeder. Sulit ito dahil available ito kahit saan, maaari itong gamitin para makatipid ng pera, at para makatipid ng lakas-paggawa.”

But while the Palatak Palay Seeder’s main goal is to help rice farmers, the government is also set to benefit from large-scale use of this innovation.

Initially, DOST-MIMAROPA turned over 19 units of Palatak Palay Seeder in Calapan, Oriental Mindoro, where they will be used by the city’s three largest rice-producing communities and some small-scale farming groups.

Once this innovation is implemented across the Philippines, the country’s rice supply is expected to increase substantially, enough to cover several months at a time. It could also help the Philippines become a rice exporter instead of an importer.

For the bigger picture, this seeder technology will potentially reduce the prices of rice and probably help President Marcos fulfill his ultimate promise of rice priced at P20 a kilo.

Ultimately, Filipino consumers stand to be the biggest beneficiaries of the DOST’s Palatak Palay Seeder, especially when it is rolled out to the country’s top [palay-producing regions](#) of Central Luzon (3.64 million metric tons of palay harvested in 2023), Cagayan Valley (3.03 million metric tons), and Western Visayas (2.26 million metric tons).

This will pave the way for increased rice production across the country and ensure sufficient, affordable and good-quality rice for every Filipino family.

This should be good news for Filipinos. After all, rice is life.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/6/government-discovers-farmer-consumer-friendly-technology>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Small fishers picket DA over commercial fishing in municipal waters

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

January 7, 2025 | 12:00am



This photo taken on September 20, 2023 shows fishermen aboard their wooden boats passing on a bag of food supplied by the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources ship Datu Bankaw, near the Chinese-controlled Scarborough Shoal in disputed waters of the South China Sea.

MANILA, Philippines — Small fishers belonging to the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA) yesterday picketed in front of the Department of Agriculture to denounce the ruling allowing commercial fishing vessels to operate within the 15-kilometer municipal waters.

PAMALAKAYA vice chairman Ronnel Arambulo said the DA is accountable over its alleged failure to uphold the preferential rights of small fisherfolk to traditional fishing grounds.

“The DA is mum at the height of the noise of small fishermen against the big businessmen inside our fishing grounds,” Arambulo said.

On Dec. 19 last year, the Supreme Court (SC) nullified provisions of the Fisheries Code restricting commercial fishing within municipal waters.

Some members of PAMALAKAYA’s provincial chapter in La Union also joined the protest.

Timek ken Namnama dagiti Babassit a Mangalap ti La Union (TIMEK) president George Cacayuran said that even before the decision, commercial fishing vessels such as trawls and buli-buli (modified Danish seine) are rampant in their municipal waters.

Cacayuran noted that only 10 percent of municipal waters are less than seven fathoms deep.

“This means that around 90 percent of municipal waters that are more than seven fathoms deep are open for exploitation of big fishing firms if the ruling is fully implemented,” he said.

Fisherfolk from several areas in Manila Bay, La Union and Cebu joined the mass action.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has asked the SC to reverse its decision allowing commercial fishing within the country’s 15-kilometer municipal waters reserved for small-scale fishers.

Former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor has accused the BFAR and the DA of “sleeping on the job and failing to appeal the SC’s decision within the required period.”

It also upheld a Malabon regional trial court decision that deemed preferential access for small-scale fishers unconstitutional.

The ruling was in response to a petition by Mercidar Fishing Corp.

However, a ranking DA official yesterday denied the allegations of Montemayor and PAMALAKAYA that the DA was “sleeping on the job” amid the SC ruling allowing commercial fishing vessels to operate within the 15-km municipal waters.

At a press briefing, DA Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa maintained that the DA, through the BFAR, has filed the necessary petitions to oppose the complaint filed against the ban of commercial fishers in the municipal waters.

“That’s not true. That’s why the department, through the BFAR, filed a motion for reconsideration. We respect the decision regarding this case, but definitely, we still uphold the rights and the privileges of our small fishermen, that is why we filed an appeal,” De Mesa said.

“Definitely, no (we are not remiss of our duty). We uphold the rights of our small fishermen,” he added.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/07/2412351/small-fishers-picket-da-over-commercial-fishing-municipal-waters>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA to impose ‘maximum SRP’ on imported rice

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

January 7, 2025 | 12:00am



Rice retail price remains high at P64 per kilo despite the implementation of Executive Order 62, which lowered the tariff on imported grains to 15 percent from the previous 35 percent.

Philstar.com / Irra Lising

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) will implement a maximum suggested retail price (SRP) on imported rice, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. announced yesterday.

Rice retail price remains high at P64 per kilo despite the implementation of Executive Order 62, which lowered the tariff on imported grains to 15 percent from the previous 35 percent.

In a chance interview after the DA’s flag ceremony, Tiu Laurel maintained that if the retail price of imported rice reaches P60 per kilo, it is already considered profiteering.

“This week, we will be meeting some of the retailers and importers. It is clear to me that there should be no P60 per kilo of imported rice in the market and in my opinion, it is already considered profiteering if the imported rice is already P60,” Tiu Laurel said.

Based on the DA's latest monitoring, the retail price of imported special rice has reached as high as P64 per kilo; imported premium rice, as high as P60 per kilo; imported well-milled rice, as high as P54 per kilo and imported regular milled rice, as high as P48 per kilo.

"We are now trying to establish what the maximum suggested retail price should be. We will be coming up with the maximum retail price very soon," Tiu Laurel said.

"Before the end of January, (hopefully,) we can release the maximum SRP. It is not a suggestion; we are saying that this should be the maximum price, but it is not a price cap," the DA chief said.

The source of origin, brokenness and type should be included in the labeling of imported rice being sold in the markets, according to a ranking DA official.

At a press conference yesterday, DA Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa stressed that the move is part of the efforts of Tiu Laurel to standardize the labeling on imported rice.

"First, the secretary believed that there is abuse in the retail price of rice. Again, we're talking only of the imported rice," De Mesa said.

Tiu Laurel said retailers and traders are intentionally confusing consumers with premium rice imports to justify the high prices of the grains.

"What should be included in the labeling of rice are first, its source (country); (second), the percent of brokenness, if it's five percent, 25 percent and (third), the type of rice. These are the three descriptions which should be included (in the price tag)," De Mesa said.

"The rice should no longer be categorized as premium or special," he added.

Tiu Laurel has said that he wants to standardize the labeling of rice so that consumers would not be shortchanged by unscrupulous traders.

At the same time, De Mesa said the retail price of imported rice should not exceed P60 per kilo after Tiu Laurel announced the imposition of maximum SRP.

"If the landed cost (of imported rice) is P43 (per kilo) for premium and special rice, the additional cost should only be from P6 to P8, so the retail price of rice should only be P51, P52. So there should be no P60. That's too much," De Mesa added.

He said the DA is finalizing the guidelines on the maximum SRP.

"The next step is to coordinate with the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Finance and the Philippine National Police on the possible sanctions (against violators)," he said.

Tomato prices spike

Meanwhile, the spike in the retail price of tomatoes can be attributed to the shortage in supply amid the successive tropical cyclones that hit the country.

At a press briefing yesterday, De Mesa said there was a 45-percent reduction in the production of tomatoes during the last quarter of 2024.

“According to the (DA’s office of) high value crops, a series of (tropical cyclones) last year caused extensive damage to the crops in their vegetative and reproductive stage, particularly in regions or areas producing these solanaceous family crops like tomatoes, bell pepper and chili pepper, particularly in Regions 2, 5 and 4-A. These resulted in significant supply shortages in the mentioned crops,” De Mesa added.

Based on the DA’s latest monitoring in Metro Manila markets, the retail price of tomato has increased to P360 per kilo or P20 per piece for a medium-sized tomato.

One kilo of tomato is more expensive compared to a kilo of chicken priced at P240, according to the agency.

“There was a significant reduction in the production of tomatoes, by 45 percent, going into the fourth quarter last year,” De Mesa said.

He added the DA expects the retail price of tomatoes to start to go down either at the end of January or in the first week of February.

“The production may resume this month until February, the start of the dry season and then expectedly, the prices will be back to normal during this period, end of January or early February,” he said.

There is no shortage in the production of siling labuyo or chili pepper, but there is also a spike in the retail price, according to the DA official.

“For siling labuyo and bell pepper, (damage to production is) not big, but the retail price really went up,” he said.

Tropical cyclones Kristine, Leon, Marce, Nika, Ofel and Pepito, which affected the country successively in four weeks late last year, resulted in extensive damage to the farm sector.

The retail price of siling labuyo or wild chili further increased to P1,000 per kilo after reaching P900 per kilo a few days ago.

Prices of highland vegetables have also increased as carrots reached P300 per kilo; Baguio beans, P200; potato, P220; pechay Baguio, P80; chayote, P80; cauliflower, P300; bell pepper, P900; broccoli, P400 and cabbage, P140.

Local red onions are sold at P170 per kilo; local white onions, P120; imported white onions, P180; imported garlic, P210 and ginger, up to P260 per kilo.

P2.89 billion released to rice farmers

At least P2.89 billion had been released to 65,000 rice farmers in the first six years of the implementation of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), the Land Bank of the Philippines (Landbank) said yesterday.

At the same time, Landbank welcomed the passage of Republic Act 11954, allowing the extension of the RCEF until 2031, as among the amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law.

“Landbank fully supports the RCEF extension toward strengthening our collective efforts to empowering Filipino rice farmers and boosting agricultural competitiveness. This significant step will bolster food security and sustainability, and the bank stands ready to continue its active role in supporting this initiative,” Landbank president and chief executive officer Lynette Ortiz said.

Ortiz added that the loans under the expanded rice credit assistance of the RCEF have supported rice production and post-harvest activities from 2019 to 2024.

The extension of the RCEF for another seven years will accelerate modernization in the rice sector and strengthen the resilience and productivity of Filipino rice farmers, according to the Landbank chief.

“As one of the implementers of the RCEF in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Landbank delivers credit assistance at low-interest rates with simplified processes to ensure accessibility for individual rice farmers and cooperatives in major rice producing provinces,” she said.

Ortiz noted that the loans have benefitted 17,767 individual rice farmers and 270 cooperatives with more than 47,100 member-beneficiaries, which were channeled for palay production, milling and trading, re-lending and the acquisition of farm machineries.

She added that 98 percent of Landbank’s direct borrowers under the program are individual rice farmers.

As of October last year, Landbank had extended outstanding loans amounting to P769.68 billion in support of agriculture, fisheries and rural development under RA 11901 or the Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Financing Enhancement Act of 2022, according to Ortiz.

She said Landbank has also assisted a total of 3.93 million small farmers and fishers nationwide through loans and various support interventions.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/07/2412354/da-impose-maximum-srp-imported-rice>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Brace for impact



EYES WIDE OPEN - Iris Gonzales - The Philippine Star

January 7, 2025 | 12:00am

Much has been said already about the 2025 budget, touted as the crookedest of all, but one glaring implication I'd like to stress is that it would set our country back, by at least a decade and possibly generations.

And we should brace for impact, not the sudden, forceful, instant-death kind of crash but an ugly, slow burn of sorts – a death by a thousand cuts.

Education

First of all, this year's budget will severely and negatively impact our future, given the cuts in the education budget.

As we all know, Congress, during the bicameral conference, slashed the budgets of core education agencies while raising the budget for the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Core education agencies account for P965.26 billion – Department of Education (P782.17 billion), State Universities and Colleges (P127.23 billion), Commission on Higher Education (P34.88 billion) and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (P20.98 billion) (Philstar.com, Jan. 3, 2025).

However, to make it appear that the education sector still gets the biggest budget as mandated by the Constitution, the government added other agencies to the education sector, such as the Local Government Academy (P529.24 million), the Philippine National Police Academy (P1.37 billion), the Philippine Public Safety College (P994.3 million), the National Defense College of the Philippines (P334.64 million), the Philippine Military Academy (P1.76 billion), etc.

This is a good cop-bad cop move. Congress is the bad cop, while the government pretends to be the good cop. At the end of the day, however, Filipinos are still at the losing end.

As many have pointed out, the Marcos administration is taking us for fools.

Article XIV, Section 5 of the Constitution requires the highest budgetary priority for education, but clearly, this is not what's happening and this will impact on our children's future.

As it is now, the Filipino youth lag behind their peers in the region. We are poor in reading, math, science and spelling. Our teachers need more support for research and continuing education.

Our state universities are raising funds through all sorts of means, including the commercialization of properties that should otherwise be used for education. This is sure to continue.

We are throwing away the future of our children and that of our children's children, and so on. As it is, we don't even have enough funds for classrooms, computers or research, and yet we slash it even more.

But our lawmakers and policymakers don't have this problem because most of them send their children to world-class educational institutions abroad.

It is the ordinary Filipinos who will suffer the consequences of this corrupted budget.

Infrastructure

The budget for infrastructure, as we know, will go to the favorite rackets of lawmakers in cahoots with contractors – flood control projects, cat's eyes, rock netting, etc. – yet come the rains, there will still be heavy flooding for sure.

The more important infrastructure, including roads to help solve traffic and improve mobility in the Philippines, will be relegated to the private sector, which will come at a cost for users.

Ayuda anomaly

And then there are the dole-outs in the form of the Ayuda sa Kapos Ang Kita Program (AKAP) which, at P26 billion, will no doubt be inflationary.

What's also not being said is that the ayuda amount of P5,000 per family will hardly make a lasting impact on the near poor.

Our lawmakers said that AKAP would help the near-poor cope with rising prices of food, etc. – a problem that should have been addressed at its root cause, such as supporting local food producers and farmers, improving food supply bottlenecks, abolishing the cartels in agriculture, etc.

Instead, the easy solution is just to import shortfalls in food supply and dole out cash.

At best, some of these AKAP beneficiary families will have a few days of decent meals, while others will spend it to pay off debts. Worse, some may use it to gamble in the hope of making more money.

It is a band-aid solution and not an investment in our future. The conditional cash transfer – whose funding was also slashed in the 2025 budget – at least required families to send their children to school, get medical check-ups and the required vaccinations.

The 4Ps program was an investment in health and education. And yet, the Marcos administration decided to slash its budget in favor of AKAP.

AKAP is prone to corruption. This is just like the COVID-19-era ayudas, which were pocketed by local executives, as flagged by the Commission on Audit.

Against all this, we should brace for impact. Our country will continue to deteriorate in terms of quality of education and health – or, in short, human capital. I haven't even discussed arts, culture and the humanities.

This year alone, ordinary Filipinos will have a challenging time, given the inflation-inducing budget.

Analysts expect December 2024 inflation to have picked up because of the still-rising prices of food, electricity and fuel – 2.6 percent in December, up from 2.5 percent in November.

Did you know that water rates also increased effective this month – P5.95 per cubic meter for Manila Water and P7.32 per cubic meter for Maynilad?

Love the Philippines

As I said, we should brace for impact. Years from now, historians will have a record of what our 2025 budget did to us. Its impact will linger for generations and generations to come.

Love the Philippines, our tourism slogan says. And yet, our leaders and lawmakers themselves can't even do that.

Stealing funds meant for our country's future isn't love at all. It's treason.

* * *

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<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2025/01/07/2412380/brace-impact>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA funds to cushion impact of imports get substantial hike

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

January 7, 2025 | 12:00am



A woman harvests string beans or "sitaw" at an embankment between a fishpond and a rice field in a village in Lingayen, Pangasinan on September 8, 2024.

STAR / Cesar Ramirez

MANILA, Philippines — Filipino farmers affected by imports, especially coffee and poultry producers, are expected to get at least a billion peso worth of support this year after the Department of Agriculture (DA) received an exponential increase in its earmarked fund meant to enhance farmers' competitiveness.

The DA got a substantial boost in its two earmarked funds aimed at protecting local farmers from the ill effects of imports as well as enhancing their competitiveness under the 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA).

The DA's remedies fund and competitiveness enhancement measures fund (CEMF), both bankrolled by the government's special safeguard duty collections, saw triple-digit rate hike this year.

The department's allocation for the remedies fund almost quadrupled to P38.569 million this year from last year's P10 million. The remedies fund is used by the government to implement trade remedies such as safeguard measures to protect domestic industries and producers that have been harmed by increased imports.

Meanwhile, the CEMF allocation this year quintupled to P1.25 billion from P250 million. The CEMF is used to implement programs that would improve the competitiveness of various agri-fishery industries that have been affected by increased imports.

The remedies fund and the CEMF were twin funds created under the Republic Act 8800 or the Safeguard Measures Act that seek to protect domestic industries, including agricultural quarters, from the injuries brought about by increased imports due to trade liberalization.

The remedies fund has been part of the DA's budget for the past decades but the CEMF was only included in the department's budget for the first time last year, more than two decades after RA 8800 was enacted into law in 2000.

Various agriculture stakeholders pointed out that it is about time that the government "puts into good use" the funds that have been "idled" for many years in national coffers. Agriculture industry stakeholders estimate that the bulk of the CEMF came from poultry and coffee imports.

"The CEMF fund is long overdue to be included in the GAA... [it has] deprived the coffee and poultry industries of the safeguards against import competition," Philippine Chamber for Agriculture and Food Inc. president Danilo Fausto told The STAR.

"We hope to see this year the grant of the CEMF to the coffee and poultry stakeholders to help the development of these industries," Fausto added.

Raul Montemayor of the Federation of Free Farmers proposed that a portion of the remedies fund be used by the DA in establishing a sound data system that would generate and analyze pertinent trade figures.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/01/07/2412286/da-funds-cushion-impact-imports-get-substantial-hike>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Gov't to set maximum SRP for imported rice

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:30 AM January 07, 2025



NEW RICE POLICY Rice vendor Eddie Pascual waits for customers at Marikina Public Market on Monday as the Department of Agriculture says it will announce “very soon” the maximum suggested retail price for imported rice to help lower prices. —Grig C. Montegrando

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) plans to introduce before the end of the month a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice to bring down prices.

In an interview on Monday, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the policy MSRP would be “released very soon,” the first time the DA would introduce such a measure.

Although he did not say what the MSRP would be, Tiu Laurel said imported rice should not be sold at P60 per kilogram in public markets as this was “already profiteering in my opinion.”

In a separate interview, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, also the DA spokesperson, said that assuming a profit margin of P6 to P8 per kilogram, the average retail price should not exceed P52.

He added that the prevailing price of P60 per kg and above for some varieties of imported rice was “really too much.”

De Mesa explained that the MSRP would be different from the price cap or suggested retail price (SRP).

If the MSRP for imported rice is set at P40 per kilogram, retailers should not sell the commodity for more than P40 a kilo.

On the other hand, the SRP guides producers, manufacturers, traders, dealers, sellers, retailers and consumers on the pricing of basic necessities and prime commodities. Retailers, however, are not required to follow the SRP since it is voluntary in nature.

Difference

“SRP per se is you are putting the exact amount that should be the selling price of the product,” De Mesa said.

“MSRP means setting a price limit, stating that the price of rice should not exceed a particular amount. So in effect, you are not specifying the SRP per se but you are providing a reference that the price of this commodity, especially rice, should not exceed the indicated amount price,” he explained.

Sought for comment, Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor said the DA should have a “firm basis” for saying that the retail price of imported rice should not exceed P60 per kg.

“DA also has to determine where the profiteering is occurring—at the import, wholesale or retail level,” Montemayor said. “There are different types, varieties, brands and source countries of imported rice with different prices and landed costs.”

Sanctions needed

“Right now, all the effort seems to be directed at retailers but we also need to look at the margins of importers and wholesalers and check if these are not excessive,” he added.

For his part, Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura executive director Jayson Cainglet said they have long been proposing a price cap or SRP for imported rice but “with punitive action” using the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act.

“What the importers promised was P42-P45 per kilo if EO (Executive Order) 62 was implemented. Why not peg the SRP there if the National Economic and Development Authority really believes that they did the right thing by pushing EO 62?” Cainglet said. The EO, which took effect in July, reduced rice tariffs from 15 percent to 35 percent to lower prices.

The DA will meet with concerned government agencies, including the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Finance and Philippine National Police to finalize the policy on the implementation of the MSRP.

As of Jan. 3 this year, imported regular milled rice was priced from P40 to P48 per kg. This variety was not available on the same day a year ago.

Imported well-milled rice went for P40 and P54 per kg, lower than last year’s P51 to P56 per kg.

Other measures being eyed by the DA to lower the price of rice imports were the removal of brand labels and the elimination of “premium” and “special” labels.

But agricultural groups called the move a “shallow attempt” to address price manipulation, adding that these would only “deceive” consumers.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2021981/govt-to-set-maximum-srp-for-imported-rice>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

PhilRice announces new rice varieties that can lower blood sugar

By: [Dale Arasa](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 11:15 AM January 06, 2025



Free stock photo from Pexels

On December 27, 2024, the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) announced new grain varieties that can help manage blood sugar.

Dr. Marissa V. Romero, a food scientist, collaborated with the International Rice Research Institute to identify NSIC Rc. 182 as a low-GI rice variety.

“NSIC Rc. 182” translates to “National Seed Industry Council Rice 182.”

PhilRice also said it used an advanced invitro laboratory test that simulates digestion, instead of using humans as test subjects.

“GI” means “glycemic index” which “measures how fast our food raises blood sugar,” according to Romero.

“The polished white rice with a GI of 70 and above can increase the risk of diabetes,” she added.

She and her team used an advanced invitro laboratory test that simulates digestion, instead of using humans as test subjects.

Then, Romero’s team used NSIC Rc. 182 as a reference to identify appropriate grain quality and characteristics for low-GI rice.

As a result, they discovered that NSIC Rc. 472, PSB (Philippine Seed Board) Rc. 10 and Rc. 514 had a similar glycemic index to Rc. 182.

“Farmers already prefer these varieties, and our study confirmed that they have relatively low GI,” Romero explained.

“These varieties, known for their resilience and high yield, offer diabetic patients a healthier option without compromising flavor.”

Aside from this PhilRice development, the Philippines has been improving nutrition for Filipinos through its other projects.

On October 1, 2024, members of the Philippine Stakeholders for Nutrition and Dietetics Inc. (PSND) and the food and beverage industry discussed partnerships for better nutrition.

Cristina Sison, President of the PSND, emphasized that Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) with the food & beverage sector are crucial in addressing the nation’s nutrition and health challenges.

Learn more about the significance of PPPs [here](#).

<https://technology.inquirer.net/139690/philrice-announces-new-rice-varieties-that-can-lower-blood-sugar>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Deceitful marketing strategy

By: [Raul J. Palabrica](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:02 AM January 07, 2025

Last week, the Department of Agriculture (DA) announced that it will proceed with its plan to remove brand labels on imported rice in order to prevent the manipulation of the prices of that staple food.

The DA said the words “premium” and “special” will not be allowed to describe imported rice sold in the markets because some rice dealers are using those labels to justify inflated prices, which defeat the government’s program to make rice more affordable to the people.

It warned that rice importers who refuse to comply with its directive would not be given permits to import rice.

As expected, the rice dealers concerned expressed their opposition to that plan because it would allegedly sow confusion, without elaborating on how that would happen.

Apparently, they are worried that if the DA pushes through with its “no rice branding” policy, their profits would be adversely affected.

Note that the price of rice is a highly political issue and with the coming midterm elections in May, it is a matter of serious political concern to the government.

This branding controversy brings to mind the so-called “colonial mentality” of some Filipinos who think that a product made in, say, the United States, is of better quality compared to something similar that is made in the Philippines. And because of that, its high price is justified or worth it.

Notice that when a seller of a locally-made product is asked where it came from or who manufactured it, the usual nonchalant reply is “local lang yan” (only made in the Philippines) as if to imply that it is of poor or lesser quality.

When the words “premium” or “special” are appended to imported rice, a subtle message is being conveyed to the prospective buyer that it is superior in quality to rice planted by Filipino farmers.

The subliminal spiel is, since imported rice is tastier or more pleasant to eat than those that are locally produced, it’s only “fair” that its buyer pay the price to have a more enjoyable meal. If you can afford it, then go for it.

And oops, if you cannot, you may just have to content yourself with eating less quality rice and miss the joy of pleasurable meals.

The branding strategy is aimed at taking advantage of the gullibility of some Filipino consumers on the choice of their foods that advertisers have mastered. It affirms the saying “a sucker is born every minute.”

The fact that the DA had taken note of this practice and threatened to withhold import permits to rice importers who engage in it indicates that the strategy is working and raking them in lots of profits.

And to further boost the flow of money, the next step would perhaps be to disparage the quality of locally-produced rice and proclaim the high nutritious value of imported rice, its inflated price notwithstanding. Or worse, repack locally-produced rice and pass them off as imported and sell them at higher prices.

The two adjectives used to describe imported rice are in the same league as the words “best,” “most famous,” “world renowned” or “most popular” that marketers use to promote their products or services.

(Incidentally, if a product is being advertised as “world famous” or “No. 1 in the world,” it would be interesting to find out how that product earned that distinction.)

Those superlative words have proven to be effective in drawing, at least initially, the attention of the products' intended market. Once that is drawn, the person behind the counter would have the opportunity to make the proper sales pitch.

Although the advertising industry in the Philippines has strict rules on the use of those words in the promotion of goods and services, they are more observed in breach or sparingly enforced.

If the adjectives the DA wants rice importers to refrain from using to describe their product are dropped, would it be okay for them to use instead "high grade" or "Class A" or other words of the same effect?

It would be back to the drawing board for marketers and advertisers. **INQ**

For comments, please send your email to rpalabrica@inquirer.com.ph

<https://business.inquirer.net/500082/deceitful-marketing-strategy>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA: Tomato prices up in NCR due to shortage

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:43 AM January 07, 2025



Inquirer file photo

MANILA, Philippines — The retail price of tomatoes in Metro Manila has gone up by as much as 400 percent since the weekend due to a substantial decrease in local supply following the series of typhoons that devastated parts of the country last year.

Based on the price monitoring of the Department of Agriculture (DA), tomatoes were selling for between P200 and P350 per kilogram as of Jan. 4 in the National Capital Region (NCR), significantly higher compared to P40 to P100 per kg exactly a year ago.

The DA, however, said it expects prices to go down later this month or in February with the start of the dry season production.

At the start of 2024, tomatoes were priced at between P50 and P100 per kg. But the series of typhoons that hit the country, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said in an interview on Monday, caused extensive damage to agricultural crops in their vegetative and reproductive stages, particularly in areas producing Solanaceae family crops such as tomatoes, bell pepper and chili pepper.

Citing a DA report, De Mesa, also the agency's spokesperson, said among the affected regions were Cagayan Valley, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon), and Bicol.

“This resulted in significant supply shortages to the above mentioned crops,” he said, adding: “There is a significant reduction in tomato production by 45 percent going into the fourth quarter of last year.”

But De Mesa said that prices may normalize by next month with the start of dry season production.

“Production may resume this January until February. It is the start of the dry season and then expectedly, the prices can go back to normal during this period ..., [probably by the] end of January or early February,” he added.

Just before Severe Tropical Storm Kristine (international name: Trami), one of the stronger typhoons to hit the Philippines last year, made landfall in October, tomatoes were selling for P55 to P95 a kilo.

Typhoon damage

Data from the DA showed that as of Nov. 23, the agriculture sector sustained P785.68 million in losses due to the combined effects of Tropical Cyclones Nika, Ofel and Pepito. Rice and high-value crops accounted for most of the damage.

The farm sector, particularly rice, also suffered P9.81 billion in losses following the onslaught of typhoons Kristine and Leon, the DA said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier described 2024 as a “depressing year” for the agricultural sector as it grappled with a “perfect storm” of adverse weather conditions and the continued prevalence of animal diseases like African Swine Fever.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2021963/da-tomato-prices-up-in-ncr-due-to-shortage>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Romualdez lauded for leadership in fulfilling legislative agenda

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 04:33 PM January 06, 2025

MANILA, Philippines — Different political parties, including his own Lakas-CMD, have praised House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez’s leadership in helping the chamber fulfill the administration’s legislative agenda.

In a joint statement on Monday, Lakas-CMD stalwarts — House officials like Senior Deputy Speaker Aurelio Gonzales Jr., Deputy Speaker David Suarez, and Majority Leader Manuel Jose Dalipe — praised Romualdez for his “strategic and decisive approach,” which they said led to “transformative reforms” and the country’s economic recovery.

According to the three officials, Romualdez was key in unifying Congress toward President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s development goals.

“Speaker Romualdez’s leadership has been the catalyst for the House’s unprecedented productivity, consistently driving results. His focus on inclusive growth and people-centered reforms demonstrates our collective commitment to improving the lives of every Filipino,” Gonzales said of Romualdez, party president of Lakas-CMD.

“Under Speaker Romualdez, the House is building a legacy of inclusive development, paving the way for a stronger, more resilient Philippines,” Gonzales added.

Suarez meanwhile cited different measures passed by Congress and signed into law by Marcos, like Republic Act No. 12022, or the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, and RA No. 12078, which extended the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund until 2031.

“These measures, passed under Speaker Romualdez’s leadership, address long-standing issues in agriculture. They dismantle cartels, empower farmers, and ensure food security,” Suarez said.

“Speaker Romualdez ensures the House remains a strategic partner of President Marcos in delivering a Bagong Pilipinas where no Filipino is left behind,” he added.

Dalipe also said the House approved on third reading 61 of the 64 priority measures of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council.

“Speaker Romualdez’s leadership shows what unity and focus can achieve. He has ensured that we pass forward-looking laws that make an immediate impact on millions of Filipinos,” he said.

“The leadership of Speaker Romualdez has shown that transformative change is possible when we work together. Moving forward, the House will champion reforms that build a more inclusive and prosperous nation,” he added.

Aside from Lakas-CMD, other political parties also lauded Romualdez’s leadership. House committee on agriculture and food chairperson and Quezon 1st District Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga, a member of the Nationalist People’s Coalition, said that legislative policies under Romualdez have supported farmers while also securing food supplies.

“Speaker Romualdez’s leadership is the cornerstone of the House’s historic achievements. His ability to inspire unity and focus on results has made the 19th Congress a key partner of President Marcos in delivering the Bagong Pilipinas vision,” Enverga said in a separate statement.

“This law is a game-changer for our farmers and all Filipinos who rely on affordable food. It dismantles the decades-long control of cartels and manipulators in the supply chain,” he added, referring to R.A. No. 12022. “Through Speaker Romualdez’s decisive leadership, we acted swiftly to protect our farmers, uphold market integrity, and secure our nation’s food supply.”

Also, Enverga said the House was able to ensure accountability in implementing agricultural and social programs.

“Speaker Romualdez’s commitment to good governance guarantees that the laws we pass are implemented effectively and benefit those who need them the most,” Enverga said.

“Speaker Romualdez has shown us what true leadership can achieve. Together, we must build on this momentum to make agriculture a pillar of national progress,” Enverga stressed. “Under his guidance, we will continue to champion the welfare of Filipino farmers and fisherfolk for a brighter future.”

On Sunday, Camarines Sur 2nd District Rep. LRay Villafuerte also praised the Speaker, saying that Romualdez’s leadership has led to productive years for the House.

“Alongside its record legislative productivity, the House — on Romualdez’s watch —has excellently harnessed its congressional oversight function to ensure government accountability in the implementation of programs and projects, especially those meant to uplift the lives of the poor and underprivileged sectors such as senior citizens, PWDs (persons with disabilities) and solo parents,” Villafuerte, president of the National Unity Party, said.

“Speaker Martin has traced the impressive performance of the 307-member House to the continued hard work and diligence of his colleagues, but, in all modestly, has failed to mention that this unbroken record of enormous legislative productivity in the 19th Congress couldn’t have happened minus the purposive, action-oriented leadership of the congressman from Leyte in shepherding through the chamber nearly all of the priority measures of the Marcos presidency,” he added.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2021919/romualdez-lauded-for-leadership-in-fulfilling-legislative-agenda>

BUSINESS WORLD:

DA wants maximum SRP on imported rice

January 7, 2025 | 12:32 am



A MAN unloads sacks of rice at a store along Dagupan St., Manila. — PHILIPPINE STAR/RYAN BALDEMOR

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

THE DEPARTMENT of Agriculture (DA) is seeking to impose a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice in an effort to further lower rice prices and curb profiteering by traders.

“We will be coming up with an (MSRP) system very soon, hopefully by the end of January it should already be released,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. told reporters on Monday.

“It’s like saying this should be the maximum price, but it’s not a price cap,” he added.

Last week, the DA said prices of some imported rice brands remained elevated despite lower import tariffs.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. last year issued Executive Order No. 62 which slashed tariffs on rice imports to 15% from 35% previously until 2028.

The lower tariff rates on rice, which took effect on July 5, 2024, was aimed at bringing down prices and curbing inflation.

Mr. Tiu Laurel said the MSRP should further lower the price of imported premium and special rice, which remained as high as P60 per kilogram in local markets as of Jan. 3.

“In our meetings with importers, and this week we will be meeting also some of the retailers and additional importers, it is clear to us that there should not be a P60 per kilo of imported rice seen in the market,” Mr. Tiu Laurel said.

Also on Monday, DA Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa said that the MSRP on imported rice would depend on the rice variety, but did not give a specific price ceiling.

“In effect, (we) are giving reference that the price of the commodity, especially rice, ay *dapat hindi lalampas sa ganitong presyo*, (it should not exceed a certain price)” he said at a media briefing.

Earlier, the DA said that it would remove labels for imported rice, which allegedly misled consumers and justified higher prices.

The department also banned the use of marketing terms like “premium” and “special” in the imported rice trade, which it said were pretexts for charging more.

Mr. De Mesa added that imported rice would now be labeled with the country of origin, type, and amount of broken rice content.

“One thing is clear, people are very brand conscious. The problem is in the label, but they are all the same; they are not premium or special,” Mr. Tiu Laurel added.

According to the DA’s price monitoring of Metro Manila markets, as of Jan. 4, a kilogram of imported special rice sells for between P54 and P65 lower compared with the P58 and P65 per kilo a year ago. On the other hand, imported premium rice was seen between P52 and P60 per kilo as of Jan. 4 from P54 and P62 per kilo in 2024.

“The P60 per kilo price for imported rice seen in the market is already profiteering, in my opinion,” Mr. Tiu Laurel said.

The agency is also set to meet with the departments of Trade and Industry, and Interior and Local Government, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, and the Philippine National Police to finalize the guidelines of the MSRP and address the profiteering of rice traders.

“We need to sort out our remedies, on how it would be labeled as profiteering, we will use that, and hopefully people will follow,” he added.

Sought for comment, former Agriculture Undersecretary Fermin D. Adriano said in a Viber message that implementing price controls would not work “if DA does not go after big-time wholesalers and importers.”

In a Viber message, Federation of Free Farmers National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor warned that imported rice may be rebranded as local rice to avoid price controls.

“They must have a firm basis for setting the maximum prices,” Mr. Montemayor said, adding that various types, brands, and shipping costs should be taken into account when pricing imported rice.

He added that the DA should also determine if profiteering is being done by importers, wholesalers, and retailers.

“Right now, all the effort seems to be directed at retailers, but we also need to look at the margins of importers and wholesalers and check if these are not excessive,” he said.

In a Viber message, Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) Executive Director Jayson H. Cainglet said the group had previously suggested the imposition of a price cap on rice, using Republic Act No. 12022 or the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act as the basis.

Under the law, agricultural smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, and its financing are considered as economic sabotage.

The law also imposes fines equivalent to five times the value of any smuggled or hoarded agricultural products, with violators also facing the prospect of life imprisonment.

Mr. Cainglet said the government has not yet determined if there are cartels responsible for hoarding and manipulating rice supply and prices.

He noted imported rice should be priced between P38 and P40 per kilo after tariffs were lowered.

As of Jan. 4, imported well-milled rice was seen between P40 and P54 per kilo in Metro Manila markets, while a kilo of regular-milled rice fetched for P40 to P48 per kilo.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2025/01/07/644984/da-wants-maximum-srp-on-imported-rice/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Tomato prices seen falling by end of January as harvest starts

January 6, 2025 | 9:29 pm



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Monday that tomato prices are expected to decline towards the end of January or early February with the beginning of the harvest.

“This is also the start of the dry season where prices are expected to go back to normal,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa said in a briefing.

ADVERTISING

As of Jan. 4, a kilogram of tomato retailed for between P200 and P350 in Metro Manila markets, according to DA price monitors, up from P150-P220 a month prior.

“There was a significant reduction in production of tomatoes of 45% going into fourth quarter last year,” Mr. De Mesa said.

Late last year, the DA reported a rise in vegetable prices due to the lack of supply from typhoon-affected production areas.

During the fourth quarter, storms caused agricultural damage of P10 billion across 183,877 hectares of farmland, leading to lost production of 380,704 metric tons.

He added that the supply of bell peppers and chili had also been affected by storms, causing prices to remain elevated.

In Metro Manila markets a kilo of red bell pepper sold for P480-P900, while green bell pepper fetched between P250 and P800.

Chili (*siling labuyo*) sold for between P500 and P1,000 per kilo in public markets.

Mr. De Mesa said that the typhoons caused extensive damage to crops in their vegetative and reproductive stages.

The affected regions were Region II, Region V, and Region IV-A. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/01/06/645002/tomato-prices-seen-falling-by-end-of-january-as-harvest-starts/>

ABANTE:

Agri chief binalaan mga pasaway na negosyante: Imported rice bawal ibenta ng P60 per kilo

Abante News

- **January 6, 2025**



Upang matuldukan ang matataas na presyo ng bigas sa pamilihan, ipatutupad ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang “maximum suggested retail price (SRP) system” bago matapos ang buwan ng Enero.

Ayon kay Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., sa ganitong sistema ay hindi na maaaring ibenta ang imported rice ng P60 per kilo pataas.

“We are now trying to establish ano ba ang maximum suggested retail price. So, we will be coming up with a maximum suggested retail price system very soon,” paliwanag ni Tui Laurel.

Nilinaw naman ng DA chief na ang SRP system ay hindi magsisilbing price cap sa retail price ng bigas.

“It’s not a suggestion, it’s like we’re saying na ito dapat ang maximum na presyo niyan. But it’s not a price cap,” paglilinaw ng kalihim.

Babala ni Tiu Laurel, kung ibebenta ng P60 bawat kilo ang imported rice, maituturing na itong profiteering.

Upang mapanagot ang mga importer at retailer sa posibleng profiteering, pupulungin ng DA ang mga opisyal ng Department of Trade and Industry, Bureau of Internal Revenue, National Bureau of Investigation, Philippine National Police at Department of Interior and Local Government.

“Para ma-sort namin ang aming remedies kung paano ma-address ito. Clearly, nasa Price Act at ang profiteering angle,” saad ni Tiu Laurel.

Tungkol naman sa mga brand ng bigas, nanindigan ang DA na kailangang alisin ang “premium” at “special” labels dahil panlilinlang umano ito sa mga mamimili.

“In the label pagka sinabi mong premium or special, hindi ba mas na-a-attract ka doon at willing ka na bilhin iyon nang mas mahal. Pero actually, hindi naman siya premium o special, parehas lang siya ng mga katabi niya,” diin ng DA chief. (PNA)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/01/06/agri-chief-binalaan-mga-pasaway-na-negosyante-imported-rice-bawal-ibenta-ng-p60-per-kilo/>

MANILA STANDARD:

DA to cap suggested retail prices of imported rice to curb profiteering

By Othel V. Campos

January 6, 2025, 8:20 pm

The Department of Agriculture (DA) will impose a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice to stabilize market prices and curb profiteering.

“There should be no more ₱60/kg imported rice in the market... ₱60/kg imported rice is already profiteering, in my opinion,” said DA Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel Jr.

He said to finalize the MSRP guidelines, the DA is working with the Department of Trade and Industry, the Bureau of Plant Industry and the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

The guidelines are expected to be released before the end of January this year.

The Philippines is expected to remain as the world’s largest rice importer. Projections show that rice imports would reach a record 4.7 million metric tons in 2024 and 4.9 million metric tons in 2025.

The rise is attributed to challenges such as El Niño, La Niña and typhoons that disrupted local production.

The government is pursuing international agreements to augment local supply.

Negotiations with Pakistan and India aim to import at least 2 million metric tons of milled rice by June 2025.

The Philippines is also strengthening ties with Vietnam, its largest rice supplier, to secure a stable supply of the staple grain.

The DA’s forthcoming MSRP policy intends to protect consumers from overpricing while ensuring imported rice remains affordable.

https://manilastandard.net/business/314543924/da-to-cap-suggested-retail-prices-of-imported-rice-to-curb-profiteering.html?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAR3fgJhvG861TQYiSgEwvfmv-Di2Pv7vCmuE5O19JuvAceRq0MxgdIQonw_aem_w5iSDQoeRxtYRJsvKvUEjg

THE MANILA TIMES:

Coffee calamity

ROUGH TRADE

By Ben Kritz

January 7, 2025

CLIMATE change policymakers and activists have long recognized that one of the biggest obstacles to progress is public indifference. The effects of climate change, as described by the language of science, are abstract to most people, and even if they do understand it, they are unlikely to be moved to take any sort of action unless they are personally and tangibly impacted by it.

However, the consequence of climate change that could inspire people to demand more action from their leaders and be willing to make their own substantial lifestyle changes may have just revealed itself.

That consequence is the price of coffee, which has skyrocketed in the past year, hitting a 47-year high in mid-December at \$3.36 per pound of mild Arabica, the benchmark commodity traded on the Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) and the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX). The price has eased slightly since then; it closed at \$3.19/lb on Jan. 3, but it is still nearly 82 percent above its 52-week low.

The reason coffee prices have soared is that over the past year, the world's two largest coffee producers, Brazil and Vietnam, have experienced severe droughts. The droughts have been attributed to the effects of the El Niño weather cycle being intensified by global warming, although in Brazil's case, the effect has been made even worse by profligate deforestation over the past couple of decades and widespread wildfires triggered mainly by slash-and-burn farming techniques. In Vietnam, conditions were starting to improve, but then the already diminished coffee harvest was impacted by Typhoon Yagi (known as Enteng here in the Philippines) in early September, causing further losses. As of now, agriculture authorities in both countries are already warning that this year's supply is likely to be compromised as well, which has driven up futures prices in the commodities markets.

The conditions in the past year are likely a mere preview of things to come. Research commissioned several years ago by Fairtrade Australia & New Zealand projected that suitable coffee-growing regions globally would decrease by half by 2050, with wild coffee — which is important to maintain the genetic diversity and sustainability of farmed coffee — likely becoming extinct by 2080. This research has not been updated recently, but with other measurements of climate change impacts showing that they are happening much faster than predictions generated in the past five to 10 years, it is entirely possible that the coffee forecast is too optimistic.

Coffee is considered a good early warning of climate change effects — the canary in the coal mine, as one researcher put it — because Coffee arabica, the most common species used in consumer

products, is particularly sensitive to changing conditions. It grows well in shady, moist environments of tropical uplands within a narrow temperature range of 17 to 21 degrees Celsius. If the temperature falls outside that range, or if there is too little or too much rainfall, coffee grows poorly or not at all. A 2022 study by the Zurich University of Applied Sciences determined that Brazil, the world's largest coffee producer, will likely lose 80 percent of its coffee-growing area by 2050 based on these temperature parameters, and Southeast Asia's coffee-growing areas will completely disappear.

In the short term, consumers will likely begin to see significantly higher prices for coffee by March or April of this year. Price shocks tend to take about six months to trickle down to the consumer level, and commodity prices really began to rocket upward around mid-

October of last year. The increases are already beginning; in November, food giant Nestlé SA announced it would raise prices and shrink package sizes to stretch supplies. Some companies are seeking alternative sources of supply. Since the existing research suggests that changing weather patterns may actually lead to more favorable conditions in some parts of Central America and the Caribbean, a few are taking a gamble on investing there. Starbucks, which buys approximately three percent of the world's coffee supply, announced in October that it is purchasing two farms in Guatemala and Costa Rica. Similarly, European coffee producer Lavazza has invested \$1.5 million to support coffee farms in Cuba.

Still, these are likely only stopgap measures; the available coffee-growing areas in these places are a fraction of the area forecast to be lost elsewhere, and if a significant reversal of global warming trends does not happen before 2050, climate change will eventually catch up to them, too. Coffee is an expensive necessity for a large part of the world, and the prospects of paying even more for it — or not being able to obtain it at any price — are going to hit where it hurts for billions of people. And for you smug tea drinkers out there who think your drug of choice is safe, science has bad news for you, too; a February 2024 study found that increasing temperatures and fluctuations in rainfall amounts are going to reduce tea production as well, confirming earlier research that had come to the same conclusion.

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https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/07/opinion/columns/coffee-calamity/2031636?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMATAAR1QwAJtUgqp8TjEPpXCtfbuvm3gDXmKI8NBPqINf5Gt-3cTfQUWz9NbL1c_aem_VivFjSW5nkaoPDOO0JI_hw

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA eyes maximum SRP of P42-P55 for imported rice

Ada Pelonia

January 7, 2025

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is eyeing the imposition of a maximum suggested retail price on imported rice ranging from P42 to P55 per kilo.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the price range would be imposed on 25- and 5-percent broken rice varieties.

He added that a “cheaper” price range would be suggested for the 100 percent broken rice variety.

“Once we have the label rules set per type of rice magkakaroon ng MSRP ranging from P42 to P55 for 25 and 5 [percent] broken and cheaper MSRP for 100 [percent] broken,” Laurel told the BusinessMirror on Monday.

He said the agency will finalize crafting the label rules within the month.

The agriculture chief noted that the plan to impose an MSRP would prevent prices of the staple from hitting over P60 per kilo.

“No variety of imported rice should cost more than P60 [for] regular or well-milled. That is clearly profiteering,” Laurel said, partly in Filipino.

He added that the measure will not include Japanese rice, glutinous rice, black rice, basmati, and specialty rice.

“In the future, the max should be mid-P50s [per kilo],” he said, partly in Filipino.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the signboard in markets should include the type of rice, the country of origin, and the percentage of broken rice.

“That’s the important information to include: [...] by type, by country of origin, and percentage ng broken,” De Mesa told reporters in a briefing on Monday.

He also noted that the MSRP would provide a reference for Filipino consumers.

“The MSRP will be imposed so that our consumers will have an idea [...] that this should be the price based on the costs of rice in the international market and the attendant costs before our imported rice reaches the markets,” De Mesa said, speaking in Filipino.

Briones: Minimal impact

However, Roehlano Briones, senior research fellow at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), pointed out that the DA’s bid to impose an MSRP on imported rice would have minimal effect on the prices of the food staple.

“Based on experience with last year’s price ceiling, this will have minimal impact,” Briones told the BusinessMirror.

For her part, University of Asia and Pacific Center for Food and Agribusiness (CFA) executive director Marie Annette Galvez-Dacul said that while the measure could tame rice prices, it could also affect the supply chain.

“A maximum SRP on imported rice can stabilize prices but may discourage imports, cause shortages, or harm farmers if set too low. Enforcement and farmer support are crucial,” Dacul told the BusinessMirror.

Earlier, the DA said it is mulling over the removal of brand labels from imported rice on reports that these are allegedly being employed as manipulation tactics by some industry players to inflate rice prices.

The retail prices of imported rice in Metro Manila markets ranged from P40 to P54 per kilo for well-milled and P40 to P48 per kilo for regular milled, based on the DA’s latest price monitoring report.

https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/07/da-eyes-maximum-srp-of-p42-p55-for-imported-rice/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR1vMsYStkbHkWHWKm8ERAWJomntumkF3q3d2VHhZgEpCisFk1Apb4fDwts_aem_WUnyJJHfzx7qptk-EDSY-Q

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA chief to small fishers: We'll defend you

Ada Pelonia and Jonathan L. Mayuga
January 6, 2025



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

THE government is ready to defend the interest of small fishers, contrary to the claim of fishermen groups that it is apathetic to their plight, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. noted that the state, through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), has filed a motion for reconsideration against the Supreme Court ruling allowing commercial fishing vessels to operate within the 15-kilometer municipal waters.

“[The MR] speaks for itself,” Laurel told the BusinessMirror on Monday.

“Also, the only entity that can allow [fishers] within 15-kilometer is the [local government unit] LGU not DA-BFAR,” he pointed out.

His reaction was sought after a coalition of small fishermen's groups said he has been remiss in upholding their rights, and cited his family's business interest—in commercial fishing—as a possible basis.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the agency would “uphold” the small fisherfolks rights.

“We respect whatever would be the decision regarding this case, but definitely, we still uphold the rights and the privileges of our small fishermen; that's why we filed a motion for reconsideration,” De Mesa told reporters in a briefing.

Pamalakaya protest

The Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) held a protest on Monday to denounce the SC ruling.

On December 19, 2024, the SC upheld a 2023 decision by the Regional Trial Court (RTC) in Malabon that allowed the Mercidar Fishing Corporation to fish in municipal waters.

Ronnel Arambulo, vice chairperson of Pamalakaya said they are holding the Department of Agriculture (DA) accountable for its failure to uphold the preferential rights of small fishermen to traditional fishing grounds.

“The DA is silent amidst the howl of protests raised by small fishermen against the incursion of commercial fishing interests in our fishing grounds. The agency is accountable once this court ruling becomes final and executor because Francisco Tiu-Laurel Jr. [DA Secretary] is pushing for policy change that will allow commercial fishing vessels in municipal waters,” Arambulo said.

Arambulo added that the illegal incursion of commercial fishers in municipal fishing grounds is already a big problem, as it results in the overexploitation of fishing grounds. “What more if these commercial fishing vessels are allowed legally to fish in municipal waters?” he said.

Some members of Pamalakaya's provincial chapter in La Union also joined the protest to lament the ruling.

George Cacayuran, president of Timek ken Namnama dagiti Babassit a Mangalap ti La Union (TIMEK), said that even before the decision, commercial fishing vessels such as trawls and buli-buli (modified Danish seine), were rampant in their municipal waters.

“Even before, commercial fishing vessels illegally fishing in our fishing grounds is already rampant,” he lamented.

He lamented that it is unfortunate that commercial fishing interest was able to twist the law, making use of the 7-fathom provision of the Fisheries Code, where commercial fishers will be eventually allowed under the SC First Division ruling.

According to Pamalakaya, only 10 percent of municipal waters are less than seven fathoms deep.

This means that around 90 percent of municipal waters that are more than seven fathoms deep are open for exploitation of big fishing firms if the ruling is fully implemented.

https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/06/da-chief-to-small-fishers-well-defend-you/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR0vx8nhdJUjmfvu8Z0a65C5U1UcgiUMN-TJi-jmIseZdIVd4llb95sDMjw_aem_dfkrvEVaaQip8d2g_xMcOA

ABANTE TONITE:

Agri exec nginuso mahinang ani sa taas-presyo ng kamatis

January 6, 2025

Posibleng bumaba na umano ang presyo ng kamatis sa mga palengke sa katapusan ng Enero o unang linggo ng Pebrero ngayong taon.

Sinabi ni Department of Agriculture (DA) Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa na inaasahang babalik sa normal ang presyo ng kamatis sa mga naturang panahon dahil sa tag-init na.

Apektado aniya ang ani ng kamatis ng magkakasunod na bagyong pumasok sa bansa noong nakaraang taon na nagdulot ng matinding pinsala sa mga pananim sa Cagayan Valley, Calabarzon, at Bicol.

“Nagkaroon ng significant reduction sa production ng kamatis by 45 percent going into the fourth quarter last year,” ani De Mesa.

Base sa Bantay Presyo ng DA noong Enero 4, nasa P200 hanggang P350 per kilo ang presyo ng kamatis sa mga palengke sa Metro Manila.

Mas mataas umano ito kumpara sa P40 hanggang P100 per kilo ng kamatis sa parehong panahon noong 2024.(PNA)

https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/01/06/agri-exec-nginuso-mahinang-ani-sa-taas-presyo-ng-kamatis/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR2p6RJO5PtxwBcaiynmR2FaT4O_Hp7YWuOsnF31tKhrN0PrVS7zjOp91-I_aem_o6n4Kf6l_QR3hHXIWRex5w