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THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

A brighter 2025 for Israel and the Philippines

[DIPLOMATIC POUCH](#) - [Ilan Fluss](#) - The Philippine Star

January 9, 2025 | 12:00am

Looking back at 2024, it's hard to believe how much we accomplished. Despite Israel fighting for its survival, we achieved our ambitious goals, strengthening ties across multiple sectors and remaining committed to our vision of building bridges of innovation and technology between Israel and the Philippines.

This year, we continue to deepen our historically friendly relationship with the Philippines, focusing on key areas such as innovation, trade and people-to-people exchanges.

A standout initiative in 2024 was the visit of Israeli water experts to the Philippines, where they engaged with key government agencies like the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture, as well as private sector representatives. They showcased Israel's advanced water management technologies and offered partnerships to address the Philippines' water challenges, especially amidst the El Niño-induced drought. The delegation observed Israel's model firsthand, aiming to influence local regulations, improve water practices and reduce red tape.

Additionally, Israel's largest vocational educational network called ORT visited the Philippines to explore opportunities for ISTEAM or TVET educational partnerships to help prepare Filipino students for a technology-driven workforce in a constantly changing world.

Even with the ongoing war, we were able to invite more than 700 young farmers for our Agricultural Internship program in Israel, never before did we invite so many. We believe that farmers can only transform their traditional methods and improve productivity by experiencing modern, smart commercial farming firsthand. This is exactly what we offer. In fact, we recently visited Bacolod to introduce Israeli smart solutions to the sugarcane industry.

Our efforts also extended to the startup and innovation sectors. The embassy proudly hosted an Israeli startup pitching event for members of the Manila Angel Investors Network, as well as a Tech and Innovation Night that highlighted Israel's leadership in artificial intelligence, fintech and cybersecurity. These events underscored Israel's role as a global hub for innovation and offered Filipino companies the chance to collaborate on cutting-edge technologies that can address shared challenges.

We organized many more events and initiatives across various sectors, including agriculture, fintech, cybersecurity, ConTech, PropTech and even a beauty event featuring Israel's leading innovative cosmetic companies.

Despite the war, Israel made significant progress in strengthening its diplomatic and humanitarian ties with the Philippines. One of the year's most fulfilling moments was my visit to Naga City and Libmanan, Camarines Sur, to provide relief to communities affected by Typhoon Kristine. The embassy donated food packs, hygiene kits, school supplies and infant essentials to help those in need. I also had the honor of officially launching the SHeG Livelihood project in Libmanan, which will empower local women entrepreneurs, particularly in small scale cranberry juice and wine production.

In addition, Israel's commitment to humanitarian efforts extended to Operation Blessing Philippines. Two NUF filtration systems were donated to assist with relief efforts following the eruption of Mt. Kanlaon in Negros. These systems were immediately deployed to provide clean water to affected communities. We also inaugurated a rehabilitation program with Caritas Philippines and assisted in the repairs of houses affected by typhoons in Ilocos Norte and Ilocos Sur. In addition to providing aid to disaster-stricken areas, we continue to support the Laura Vicuña Foundation, a shelter for girls that has been adopted by the Israeli embassy in recent years.

Education and cultural exchange continued to be a cornerstone of our relationship with the Philippines. We successfully inaugurated learning resource centers in key cities – Ofakim in Quezon City, Be'eri in San Juan and Jerusalem in Taguig. These will provide Filipino students with innovative and comfortable spaces for learning.

In tourism, Israel's Minister Haim Katz visited Manila and signed a joint declaration with the Department of Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco to strengthen cooperation in the field of tourism between our nations. Additionally, we hosted the first-ever Israeli Wine Night in Manila, showcasing Israel's unique wines and promoting wine tours as a new attraction alongside Holy Land pilgrimages.

As we enter 2025, the Israeli embassy in Manila remains committed to strengthening the bond between Israel and the Philippines. We are excited about the potential for further collaboration in innovation, education and security. Our focus will be on creating more high-level exchanges and joint ventures, particularly in technology, agriculture and water management. Israeli tech companies are eager to collaborate with Filipino counterparts to provide sustainable solutions for shared challenges.

We are optimistic about the opportunities the new year holds. Israel's vision for the future is one rooted in peace, security and prosperity, not only for our own people but for our Filipino friends and allies around the world.

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Ilan Fluss is the Israeli Ambassador to the Philippines.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2025/01/09/2412814/brighter-2025-israel-and-philippines>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

‘Maximum SRP on imported rice may drop to P47/kilo’

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

January 9, 2025 | 12:00am



“The initial estimate of P60 (per kilo) for five percent broken may still go down once the cost in the international market further goes down. For 25 percent broken, our initial estimate is the retail price should not exceed P50 per kilo,” Department of Agriculture (DA) Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The maximum suggested retail price for imported rice may still go down to P47 per kilo, Department of Agriculture (DA) Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said yesterday, after farmers’ group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) said the plan of the DA to impose a maximum SRP on imported grains not exceeding P60 per kilo is still high.

“The initial estimate of P60 (per kilo) for five percent broken may still go down once the cost in the international market further goes down. For 25 percent broken, our initial estimate is the retail price should not exceed P50 per kilo,” De Mesa said.

“Considering the current exchange rate and tariff of 15 percent and \$30 shipping cost, plus P8 added cost of the retailers, it is very clear that based on our calculation, it should be P50 or lower. The estimate of SINAG of P45 to P47, that’s a possibility,” he said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the DA will implement a maximum SRP on imported rice, saying the 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.

Tiu Laurel maintained that if the retail price of imported rice reaches P60 per kilo, it is already considered profiteering.

He added the DA is considering declaring a national food security emergency to allow him to release rice stocks held in reserve by the National Food Authority to bring down retail prices.

All-time high rice imports

The country's rice imports in 2024 hit an "all-time high" of 4.684 million metric tons (MMT), De Mesa said on Wednesday.

At a press briefing, De Mesa attributed the record-high rice importation last year to the drop in local palay production after it went down to 19.3 MMT compared to 20.06 MMT in 2023.

"That's the highest (since we started importing). Our consumption is high at 114 kilos per capita per year," de Mesa said.

In 2023, the total rice imports totaled 3.6 MMT; 2022, 3.8 MMT; 2021, 2.77 MMT; 2022, 2.1 MMT; and 2019, 1.857 MMT.

"We can see that despite the increase in the importation in 2024, there was a huge drop in the local production. From 20.06 MMT (palay production) in 2023, it decreased to 19.3 MMT (last year). The reduction was very significant and the import compensated our losses because of El Niño, La Niña during the last quarter of the year," de Mesa added.

He said based on official data from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), as of Dec. 31, 2024, rice imports almost reached the earlier projection of the DA of 4.7 MMT

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/01/09/2412915/maximum-srp-imported-rice-may-drop-p47kilo>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA chief names new undersecretary

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

January 9, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has appointed a new undersecretary following the passing of Deogracias Victor Savellano.

Tiu Laurel issued Special Order No. 11 designating Constante Palabrica as undersecretary for livestock.

“He will perform the functions, duties and responsibilities in concurrent capacity as assistant secretary for swine and poultry,” the order stated.

Savellano died of abdominal aneurysm on Tuesday, according to Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa.

De Mesa said Palabrica would serve as officer-in-charge until President Marcos appoints a permanent undersecretary for livestock.

Tiu Laurel expressed his grief over the passing of Savellano, who was part of the “dream team” at the DA.

The DA dream team is composed of 13 undersecretaries and 14 assistant secretaries.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2025/01/09/2412940/da-chief-names-new-undersecretary>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

P29 brings high-quality rice to 35M poor Filipinos

Everybody wins in ‘Rice for All’ program

[INQUIRER.net BrandRoom](#) / 11:00 AM January 08, 2025

By Intercontinental Broadcasting Corporation (IBC-13)

Because rice is considered the essence of the Filipino, it’s only fair that they should be offered to the Pinoy consumer in the most affordable way possible.

This is exactly what the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has set out to do since it assumed office in the wake of a global inflationary trend that affected the prices of local agricultural products.

Adding to the inflationary conundrum in the price of rice are various factors that have negatively affected Philippine agriculture. These factors include long government neglect, Climate Change, and societal trends that lead to drop in the number of farmers.

These factors have resulted in the current inadequacy in the supply of locally produced rice that would satisfy domestic demand. As a result, the country became one of the top rice-importing nations in the world.

A study conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture published in March 2024 projected that the Philippines’ rice consumption for the monitoring period 2024 to 2025 will increase in line with the country’s population growth.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) estimates per capita consumption at 120 kilos, which means on average each Filipino consumes 10 kilos a month.

These projections highlight the urgent need to not only improve food production in the country, but also make the price of rice more affordable—particularly for the poor whose rice consumption accounts for nearly 20 percent of their budget, double that of the average Filipino consumer.

The latest report from PSA indicates that at the national level, a kilogram of regular milled rice had an average retail price of over 49 pesos during the second phase of November 2024 or from November 15 to 17.

In a bid to make rice more accessible to the public and in line with President Marcos’ goal of ensuring food on the table of every household, the Department of Agriculture (DA) has launched two

programs that seek to provide affordable rice to Filipinos – the Program 29 (P29) and the Rice for All (RFA) Program.

As part of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s directive to ensure food security for every household, the Department of Agriculture (DA) has launched two initiatives—Program 29 (P29) and the Rice for All (RFA) Program—to provide affordable rice to Filipinos. (File photo: PCO)

These two programs are in line with the President's aim to achieve food security for the country. "Food security remains at the forefront of our national agenda," according to the President.

"Anchored on our vision for a prosperous, resilient, and secure Philippines by the year 2040, the overarching goal of this administration is to build an inclusive society when no one is hungry, where Filipinos live long and healthy lives, and where they are provided with an environment built upon trust and security, and where they can be innovative and remain smart and responsive to the problems of the day," the President added.

The P29 was launched on July 5, 2024 and was initially available at 10 KADIWA ng Pangulo (KNP) centers in Metro Manila and Bulacan, with the end goal of eventually making the affordable rice available nationwide.

KNP is a market linkage facilitation program where basic commodities, including agricultural products, are sold at a more affordable price.

The P29 aims to provide affordable high-quality rice for vulnerable households across the country. It aims to reach as many as 6.9 million such households or around 35 million Filipinos, particularly the disadvantaged such as indigents (4Ps beneficiaries), senior citizens, persons with disabilities (PWD), solo parents, and indigenous people.

Building on the success of the P29 rice program, the DA launched the "Rice-for-All" program at select Kadiwa outlets, alongside well-milled rice at P45 per kilo, affordable fruits, vegetables, fish, and meat, to ensure wider access to affordable rice for all Filipinos. (File photo: DA)

"Ang Program 29 ay isa sa dinirektiba po ng ating mahal na Pangulo bilang tugon sa mataas na presyo ng bigas," DA Assistant Secretary for Agribusiness, Marketing and Consumer Affairs Atty. Genevieve Velicaria-Guevarra explained.

Since the "Program 29's" initial rollout in July, the initiative has expanded to other cities and provinces in the country, with the government eyeing to make the 29 pesos per kilo rice available also in Visayas and Mindanao areas.

The rice used in the program is sourced from the non-regular stocks of the National Food Authority and purchased by the Food Terminal Inc. (FTI) — a corporation under the DA — and then sold to Filipinos in the vulnerable sector at a more affordable price.

Taking another step closer to reaching the government’s goal of providing Filipinos access to affordable food, the DA also rolled out the “Rice for All” program by selling well-milled rice for only 40 pesos per kilo.

The program, which started on August 1, 2024, provides every Filipino consumer an affordable rice option. Under the initiative, well-milled rice is sold in various KNP centers and public markets in different areas, primarily in Luzon, at P40 a kilo, with a limit of 25 kilos a day.

RFA is a self-sustaining initiative unlike the subsidized P29 program.

“Yung Rice-for-All program natin was following yung pag-launch natin ng Program 29. We launched it to cater to vulnerable sectors. There was a concern na parang bakit sila (vulnerable sectors) lang ang merong rice na mas mura. So ito po yung naging response natin,” Velicaria-Guevarra explained.

According to Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr., grains sold under “Rice for All” program could be further lowered depending on the wholesale market prices of rice.

He assured that in general, the price of rice sold under the initiative is lower than the prevailing retail price.

“President Marcos wants to ensure that every Filipino has access to affordable food during these trying times. In line with this, we will continue to expand the KADIWA network and make available more basic goods to the general public,” the official said.

“The vision is to lower the price of this staple food under the Rice-for-All program to the most affordable level possible,” he added.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. visited the Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair and Kadiwa ng Pangulo in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro on April 23, 2024. (File photo: PCO)

The Program is successfully serving its target population as a result of the Publicus Asia PAHAYAG survey from September 15 to 19, 2024, which showed that 82 percent of respondents approved the two programs’ launching, making them the top or considered the “most approved” government initiative.

DA Assistant Secretary Arnel V. de Mesa disclosed that as of October 2, 2024, the P29 program sold around 688 metric tons or 688,015 kilograms of non-regular NFA rice stocks; while the Rice for All

sold around 122 metric tons or 122,000 kilograms of well-milled rice on top of 0.85 metric tons or 850 kilograms of premium rice.

As of November 2024, a total of 704,126 kilograms of P29 rice were sold through various KADIWA Centers, serving 140,827 households.

Reaching Filipino households

On the ground, thousands of Filipinos have benefited from the two programs.

Not only is the rice sold at a cheaper price, but the savings from their purchase can also be used to buy other items that could help run the household.

Among those who have purchased affordable rice is 72-year-old Alicia Casaol, a resident of Malabon City.

Alicia stays in a home with seven other family members—her husband, her two children, and her four grandchildren. Living in a huge household, Alicia purchases rice three times a week.

“Malaking bagay ang KADIWA, mura ang bilihin. Lalo na ang bigas. Hindi namin kaya bumili ng 60 kilo, ang mahal. Ito, 29 pesos o 42 pesos meron ka na. Sa iba, malaking halaga ang magagastos,” she said.

“Noon, 53 pesos ang binibili namin nung wala pang KADIWA. Eh ngayon, gustong-gusto ko talaga sa KADIWA, doon lang kami bibili,” the senior citizen said.

With a budget of 200 pesos, Alicia was able to purchase five kilos of rice at P29 per kilo, two cans of sardines and five eggs good for three days.

“Sa totoo lang, marami nang bumibili talaga rito sa amin ng bigas sa KADIWA. Lalo na yung mga walang-wala. Kasi malaking bagay yung 29 pesos na bigas,” she said.

“Malaking bagay ang KADIWA sa amin. Malaki naitutulong. Lalo ng ganyang mga bilihin. Sabi ko nga, tuloy-tuloy sana ang KADIWA,” Alicia said.

“Malaking pasasalamat namin sa gobyerno dahil malaking bagay ito lalo sa mga kagaya ko na walang pera,” she added.

Mary Grace Akuin, a 44-year-old mother from Malabon City, said she used to purchase rice at 52 to 60 pesos per kilo. However, she was able to save money due to the rice sold under the Rice-for-All program.

“Pinakamababa na bigas sa palengke 60 pesos. Sa KADIWA 43 pesos. ‘Yung isang kilo na mabibili mo sa palengke sa KADIWA magiging isa’t kalahati na. Or makakabili ka pa ng sardinas o kaya itlog doon sa matitira. Para sa akin malaking tulong talaga yung KADIWA,” Mary Grace said.

The rice program does not only benefit common consumers. It also has a positive ripple effect on the NFA itself.

The P29 program, for example, provides NFA, a government corporation under the DA, a ready market for its non-regular stocks that it needs to sell to raise funds to sustain its operations and pay the salaries of its workers.

Currently, both the “Program 29” and the “Rice-for-All” program are already operating in 21 KADIWA sites in Metro Manila, Central Luzon, and Calabarzon.

The government is still eyeing to further expand the affordable rice’s availability to other parts of the country.

President Marcos has likewise ordered the DA, together with the Department of Budget and Management, to expand the coverage of the rice programs.

In a meeting with the DA and the National Irrigation Administration, the President approved the utilization of P29 Program’s 5-billion-peso allocation for the Rice for All program to finance logistics repair and rehabilitation of government facilities and warehouses where KADIWA Centers may be set up.

The opening of more KADIWA Centers in the country will expand the number of areas where affordable rice is available. The rehabilitation is expected to benefit an additional 2.3 million Filipinos in its initial rollout.

“The DA and DBM have been directed to expand the P29 and the Rice for All program and increase our KADIWA ng Pangulo centers from 21 to 300 by mid-2025. This will bring affordable rice within reach for more communities across the country,” he said.

ADVT.

This article is brought to you by Presidential Communications Office through PDI.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/260388/p29-brings-high-quality-rice-to-35m-poor-filipinos>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA bans import of birds, poultry products from New Zealand

By: [Stephanie Sevellano](#) -

[Philippine News Agency](#) / 03:19 PM January 08, 2025

Agence France-Presse

MANILA, Philippines – The Department of Agriculture (DA) announced Wednesday the temporary import ban of domestic and wild birds, and other poultry products from New Zealand after the country reported an avian influenza (AI) outbreak in November 2024.

“(The import ban) is crucial in preventing the entry of high pathogenic avian influenza into the Philippines, safeguarding the health of the local poultry population,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement, about newly-issued Memorandum Order 01.

The order came after New Zealand officially reported positive results of an AI H7N6 strain from domestic birds tested in East Otago, Waitaki, and Canterbury in late November to the World Organization for Animal Health.

Under DA Memorandum Order 01, the ban applies to domestic and wild birds, eggs, day-old chicks, semen, and poultry meat. The processing and issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSIC) of the said products is also suspended.

The entry of shipments that are already in transit, loaded, or at the ports before the ban may be allowed, provided that the products were produced or slaughtered before Nov. 9, 2024.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/260555/da-bans-import-of-birds-poultry-products-from-new-zealand>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Rice price ceiling could be expanded to other produce

January 8, 2025 | 8:40 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/MIGUEL DE GUZMAN
By **Justine Irish D. Tabile**, *Reporter*

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Wednesday that it is planning to set a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for other imported food commodities, expanding on the MSRP scheme for imported rice, which is expected to launch by the end of the month.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said: “Imported rice is just the beginning. We plan to cast the price net wider to include other imported food commodities like vegetables and meat.”

In a statement, the DA said it is working with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to explore ways to alleviate the financial burden on consumers.

Trade Secretary Ma. Cristina A. Roque said she will soon convene the National Price Coordinating Council to review strategies for stabilizing food prices.

“We aim to strike a balance between business sustainability and consumer protection ... We want the public to know that we are leaving no stone unturned in our efforts to ease the burden on consumers,” Ms. Roque said.

According to the DA, it and the DTI are in the process of determining an MSRP for rice with the goal of allowing rice importers and retailers to operate profitably without subjecting consumers to excessively high prices.

Meanwhile, the DA said that it is also considering the declaration of a national food security emergency, which would grant the Secretary the authority to release rice stocks held in reserve by the National Food Authority, helping to increase supply and bring down retail prices.

On DTI's part, it said that it will review the prevailing regulations governing the sale and labeling of manufactured goods and adapt them to agricultural commodities.

The Secretaries have agreed to draft and sign a memorandum of understanding to expedite efforts to address the persistently high price of rice and, eventually, other essential commodities, the DA said.

"By tackling both supply and pricing issues, the government aims to stabilize the rice market and make it more affordable for consumers nationwide," it added.

In a separate statement, the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) said it is exploring possible collaboration with the DA to address anti-competitive practices in agricultural.

"The discussion focused on tackling issues such as price fixing, abuses of dominant market position, and the smuggling of agricultural products, which undermine competition and can lead to higher prices," the PCC said.

"The dialogue marked an important step in enhancing collaboration between the two agencies as they work towards safeguarding the interests of farmers, fisherfolk, and consumers," it added.

"Through this collaborative approach, the PCC and DA aim to foster a competitive market environment that benefits all stakeholders in the agricultural sector," the PCC said.

In a briefing on Wednesday, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa said that rice imports amounted to 4.68 million metric tons (MMT) in 2024, up from 3.8 MMT a year earlier.

"Since the tariffs are now lower along with our efforts to combat smuggling, we have reduced the incentive to smuggle," he added.

He said the import levels could reflect the limited supply of smuggled rice.

For 2025, he said imports will depend on how domestic producers perform.

"We are hoping and we are still expecting that the rice sub-sector can recover this year because there's no El Niño and the rain that we're experiencing in the first part of the year because of La Niña is beneficial for our dams and for the areas that need water," he said.

"We are still hoping that our production will be good, and if it is good, and that will correspondingly reduce the volume of imports later on. But it is still early to tell," he added.

For 2025, the DA projects domestic rice production to return to the 20 million metric-ton level.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/01/08/645506/rice-price-ceiling-could-be-expanded-to-other-produce/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Inflation could ease to around 2% this year

January 9, 2025 | 12:33 am



VEGETABLES are on sale at a market in Tandang Sora, Quezon City, Jan. 2, 2025. — PHILIPPINE STAR/MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

By **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**, *Reporter*

HEADLINE INFLATION could fall to around the 2% range this year amid easing price pressures, analysts said, which would be well below the projection of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

“We maintain our forecast for consumer price index (CPI) inflation to average 2.7% in 2025 which is lower than the 3.2% in 2024, and below BSP’s baseline forecast of 3.3%,” Nomura Global Markets Research analysts Euben Paracuelles and Nabila Amani said in a commentary.

Inflation accelerated to 2.9% year on year in December from 2.5% in November.

This brought the full-year print to 3.2%, matching the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas’ (BSP) forecast for 2024. It also marked the first time that full-year inflation fell within the central bank’s 2-4% target since 2021, when inflation averaged 3.9%.

This year, the BSP expects inflation to average 3.3%. Accounting for risks, inflation could hit 3.4%.

HSBC economist for ASEAN Aris D. Dacanay said he expects inflation to average 2.5% in 2025, citing the continued drop in rice prices.

“Nonetheless, we think the acceleration in inflation may be short-lived, as downside risks to global oil prices persist while retail rice prices fall,” he said.

In December, rice inflation sharply slowed to 0.8% from 5.1% in November and 19.6% a year prior.

Rice is one of the biggest factors driving faster inflation, but prices have been declining since the government in July slashed tariffs on rice imports to 15% from 35% previously. This tariff regime is set to be implemented through 2028.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) has also noted the possibility for rice inflation to turn negative this month.

“Importantly, the output gap remains negative, and we continue to assume that the impact of lower rice import tariffs on food inflation will continue to play out in coming months,” Nomura said.

Nomura said inflation pressures are seen to be “well-contained” amid the government’s continued supply-side measures and its oil price assumptions.

“You also have the deflationary impulse from Chinese goods as trade gets rerouted. And at the same time, risks to global energy prices are tilted to the downside,” Mr. Dacanay said.

“Because if Fed rates are high while mainland China growth is weaker than before, the demand for global energy or at least oil, will actually get reduced, bringing down energy prices and bringing down inflation,” he added.

Meanwhile, Citi economist for the Philippines Nalin Chutchotitham projects inflation to average 3.1% this year, still below the BSP’s forecast.

She said inflation this year will continue to be “well-within policy target” despite upside risks from electricity rate increases.

“We revised up 2025 inflation from 2.8% to 3.1% on the back of planned increases in electricity rates during the first half, noting also potential further adjustments in the remainder of the year, although this may be partly offset by potentially lower oil prices,” Ms. Chutchotitham added.

With inflation expected to remain manageable, the BSP has room to continue its easing cycle.

“We see limited implications for our BSP forecasts because of the still-favorable inflation outlook, which is the main policy driver for BSP despite a more hawkish Fed,” Nomura said.

The BSP kickstarted its rate-cutting cycle in August last year, delivering a total of 75 bps for 2024. This brought the benchmark rate to 5.75% by yearend.

“We still have one more CPI print before the next BSP meeting, and unless we see another sharp pickup in headline inflation to well above 3%, we see no reason for BSP to pause,” Nomura added.

Nomura expects the BSP to deliver 75 bps worth of cuts this year in its first three meetings.

“Despite currency weakness, BSP may continue to cut rates and decouple from the Fed or regional peers, given its assessment of well-anchored inflation expectations and a limited FX (foreign exchange) pass-through,” it added.

The peso fell to the record-low P59-per-dollar level thrice last year, twice in November and once in December.

Meanwhile, Mr. Dacanay sees up to 75 bps of rate cuts by the third quarter, in increments of 25 bps.

“We updated our policy rate forecast and expect a more gradual easing cycle, wherein the BSP — mindful of Fed moves and FX volatility — will cut in alternate rate-setting meetings until the policy rate reaches 5% by the third quarter,” he said.

“However, we do not think the upside surprise in headline inflation derails the policy rate outlook altogether. Looking under the hood, the inflationary pressures seem to be short-lived in nature,” he added.

BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. has said the central bank prefers to reduce rates in “baby steps.”

“The current policy rate remains relatively high, and given the time lag in monetary policy, we expect the BSP to continue with its gradual 25-bp rate cuts in February, the second quarter and third quarter,” Ms. Chutchotitham said.

The BSP trimmed the number of Monetary Board meetings to six this year from seven previously, citing the need for more in-depth analysis of data.

“We expect 50 bps more likely to follow in 2026 if inflation stays close to the target midpoint, thus bringing real policy rate closer to historical level and continue to support economic growth,” Ms. Chutchotitham added.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2025/01/09/645542/inflation-could-ease-to-around-2-this-year/>

REMATE:

Mga manok, poultry product ng New Zealand, bawal muna sa Pinas

January 8, 2025 17:22



MANILA, Philippines – Pansamantalang ipinagbawal ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang pag-aangkat ng mga domestic at wild na ibon, itlog, sisiw, semilya, at karne ng manok mula sa New Zealand kasunod ng pagsiklab ng avian influenza (AI) na iniulat noong Nobyembre 2024.

Sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na ang pagbabawal, na nakabalangkas sa Memorandum Order 01, ay naglalayong pigilan ang pagpasok ng high pathogenic AI H7N6 strain sa Pilipinas at protektahan ang lokal na kalusugan ng manok.

Ang mga sanitary at phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC) para sa mga apektadong produkto ay sinuspinde. Ang mga pagpapadala na nasa transit o sa mga daungan bago ang pagbabawal ay maaaring payagan kung ang mga ito ay ginawa o kinatay bago ang Nobyembre 9, 2024. **RNT**

<https://remate.ph/mga-manok-poultry-product-ng-new-zealand-bawal-muna-sa-pinas/>

REMATE:

Pagsasara ng rice at corn mills sa 1K barangay, pinatatalupan

January 8, 2025 16:09



MANILA, Philippines – Hiniling ni Agri Partylist Rep Wilbert Lee sa Kamara na siyasatin ang nakakaalarmang pagsasara ng mga small-scale rice at corn mills sa may 1,000 barangay sa bansa sa nakalipas na 10 taon.

Sa House Resolution (HR) No.2150 na inihain ni Lee iginiit nito na malaking epekto sa kabuhatan at food security ang pagsasara ng mga mill. “Nakakabahala ang pagsasara ng mga rice and corn millers sa napakaraming barangay sa bansa na hindi nakasabay sa pagdagsa ng mas murang imported na produkto sa merkado. Marami na naman nating magsasaka ang apektado ang kabuhatan at kita sa mga pagsasarang ito,” pahayag ni Lee.

Sa datos ng Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) lumilitaw na may 15,436 barangays na may rice at corn mills noong 2023, mababa ito kumpara sa 16,476 noong 2013.

“Kung magpapatuloy ito, bababa pa ang kita ng ating mga lokal na magsasaka, mawawalan sila ng gana, at bababa ang produksyon na siya namang magpapalayo sa katuparan ng food security sa bansa,” giit ni Lee.

Sinabi ni Lee na dapat isama sa gagawing imbestigasyon ang pagsilip sa mga programa ng gobyerno pada sa mga rice at corn millers.

“With small-scale rice and corn mills closing despite recurring calls to elevate the state of the country’s agriculture sector, the government needs to recalibrate its policies so progress can be felt by our local food producers,” pagtatapos pa ni Lee. *Gail Mendoza*

<https://remate.ph/pagsasara-ng-rice-at-corn-mills-sa-1k-barangay-pinatatalupan/>

REMATE:

Presyo ng kamatis bababa sa Pebrero – DA

January 8, 2025 14:43



MANILA, Philippines – Sinabi ng pamahalaan na ang mataas na presyo ng kamatis ay malamang na bumaba sa buwan ng Pebrero ng kasalukuyang taon ayon sa isang opisyal ng Department of Agriculture (DA) noong Lunes Enero 6.

Ayon sa price monitoring ng DA noong Enero 4, ang presyo ng kamatis sa mga pamilihan sa Metro Manila ay nasa pagitan ng ₱200 at ₱300 kada kilo.

Kaugnay nito, sinabi ni Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa, ang tagapagsalita ng DA, sa isang press briefing na ang matinding pagtaas ng presyo ng kamatis ay dahil sa sunud-sunod na mga bagyo noong nakaraang taon na lubhang nakaapekto sa mga pananim sa kanilang vegetative at productive phase.

Ang ganoon, aniya, ay nagresulta sa malaking kakulangan sa suplay para sa mga kamatis, na nakakita ng 45 porsiyentong pagbawas sa ikaapat na quarter ng nakaraang taon.

“So ‘yan, doon ‘yung pinakamalaki ‘yung 45 percent reduction in volume of production ani De Mesa.

“Maaaring ipagpatuloy ang produksiyon ng kamatis sabi nila ngayong Enero hanggang Pebrero, magsimula din ng dry season, at pagkatapos ay inaasahang babalik sa normal

ang mga presyo sa panahong ito sa Pebrero, katapusan ng Enero o unang bahagi ng Pebrero” dagdag niya.

Samantala may mga ulat pa na may ilang retailer sa kalakhang lungsod na nagbebenta ng kamatis sa halagang ₱400 kada kilo. (*Santi Celario*)

<https://remate.ph/presyo-ng-kamatis-bababa-sa-pebrero-da/>

REMATE:

Unang taong nasawi sa bird flu kumpirmado sa US

January 8, 2025 11:36



HAMILTON, Canada – Kinumpirma ng mga opisyal ng kalusugan ng Louisiana ang unang pagkamatay ng tao sa United States na sanhi ng bird flu (H5N1), na kinasasangkutan ng isang indibidwal na higit sa 65 taong gulang na may dati nang kondisyong medikal.

Ang pasyente ay nahawahan ng virus pagkatapos ng pagkakatad sa isang kawan sa likod-bahay at mga ligaw na ibon, ayon sa Louisiana Department of Health.

Sa kabila ng pagtanggap ng pangangalagang medikal, ang indibidwal ay namatay sa sakit, na minarkahan ang una at tanging naiulat na kaso ng bird flu sa estado at bansa.

Binigyang-diin ng mga awtoridad na ang panganib ng paghahatid ng H5N1 sa pangkalahatang publiko ay nananatiling mababa.

Gayunpaman, ang mga indibidwal na nagtatrabaho sa mga ibon o madalas na mga lugar na may mga ligaw na ibon ay pinapayuhan na mag-ingat.

Ipinaabot ng departamento ang pakikiramay nito sa pamilya ng pasyente habang inuulit ang kahalagahan ng mga hakbang sa pag-iwas para sa mga nasa high-risk na grupo. *RNT*

<https://remate.ph/unang-taong-nasawi-sa-bird-flu-kumpirmado-sa-us/>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Project explores alternative cropping

By Leander C. Domingo

January 9, 2025

A RESEARCH project on Agriculture 4.0 without Chemical Synthetic Plant Protection (NOcsPS) is exploring alternative cropping systems that eliminate the use of chemical-based plant protection products while optimizing the use of mineral fertilizers.



German Agricultural Scientist Enno Bahrs (center) recently presented this research project at Searca Headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna. At his left is Searca Director Glenn Gregorio. SEARCA PHOTO

German Agricultural Scientist Enno Bahrs recently presented this research project at the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) in Los Baños, Laguna, under the center's Agriculture and Development Seminar Series.

Bahrs, who heads the Department of Agricultural Business Management at the University of Hohenheim in Germany, explained that social acceptance of chemical pesticides in conventional agriculture is "declining due to concerns about potential residues in food products and negative impacts on biodiversity."

Noting that relying solely on organic agriculture to meet future global food demands remains uncertain, he also underscored that NOcsPS cropping systems could serve as a bridge between conventional and organic farming systems.

NOcsPS stands for the German term "LaNdwirtschaft 4.0 Ohne chemisch-synthetischen PflanzenSchutz" that translates to Agriculture 4.0 without chemical synthetic plant protection products.

The NOcsPS project is a groundbreaking research endeavor within the Agricultural Systems of the Future funding program, supported financially by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) of Germany.

Bahrs also explained that conventional farmers could reduce their use of chemical synthetic plant protection products, while organic farmers may consider alternative fertilization strategies, such as optimized mineral fertilizer use.

The German scientist also presented the four-year yield average of different cropping systems and crops such as maize (corn), soybean, winter wheat 1, winter wheat 2, triticale and spring barley.

Bahrs recommended using the grain unit (GU) as a common denominator in comparing the yields of different fruits and systems to make these systems comparable in their sustainability impact.

"The grain unit is an indicator that reflects the energy supply capacity of a product with the calculated energy supply capacity of barley, depending on the structure of the use of the agricultural product in feeding," he said.

Bahrs underscored that in NOcsPS cropping systems, results yields are reduced compared with conventional systems depending on the location and the position of the crop in the crop rotation. Also, yield losses in NOcsPS cropping systems were so far lower than expected.

"There are challenges in pesticide-free farming such as yield loss due to diseases, pest infestation, weeds, economic risk, and marketing challenges due to inconsistent crop quality and limited market opportunities," he said.

However, Bahrs said that pesticide-free farming has advantages, particularly in terms of sustainability and environmental impact.

"Pesticide-free farming has lower toxicity than conventional farming and requires less land per product unit than organic farming," he said.

In addition, Bahrs said pesticide-free farming is a compelling story, sharing that "the system is much easier to explain than using less pesticide terms, which can be considered within the scope of an eco-certified system that may involve a lot of rules and standards."

"For a successful and sustainable application of NOcsPS cultivation systems, it is required that there is effective nonchemical plant protection and fertilization measures using modern technologies and suitable site-adapted crops and crop rotations," he said.

The project's second phase will begin in 2025 to evaluate the long-term effects of these cropping systems on ecosystem services, economic viability and sustainability.

NOcsPS is a multidisciplinary research project involving the University of Hohenheim, the Georg-August-University Göttingen and the Julius Kühn-Institute.

Funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), Searca said NocsPS is one of the eight consortia under the Agricultural Systems of the Future (Agrarsysteme der Zukunft), as part of the National Research Strategy BioEconomy 2030.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/09/business/agribusiness/project-explores-alternative-cropping/2033453>

THE MANILA TIMES:

John Deere launches autonomous models

By The Manila Times

January 9, 2025

JOHN Deere has unveiled new autonomous machines for agriculture, commercial landscaping and construction.

Building on Deere's autonomous technology first revealed at the Consumer Electronics Show 2022 in the United States, the company's second-generation autonomy kit combines advanced computer vision, artificial intelligence and cameras to help the machines navigate their environments.



For large-scale agriculture, the 9RX farm tractor offers the brand's second-generation autonomy kit, featuring 16 individual cameras arranged in pods to enable a 360-degree view of the field. JOHN DEERE PHOTO

"Our agriculture, construction and commercial landscaping customers all have work that must get done at certain times of the day and year, yet there is not enough available and skilled labor to do the work," said Jahmy Hindman, chief technology officer at John Deere.

"Autonomy can help address this challenge. That's why we're extending our technology stack to enable more machines to operate safely and autonomously in unique and complex environments.

This will not only benefit our customers, but all of us who rely on them to provide the food, fuel, fiber, infrastructure and landscaping care that we depend on every day," he added.

For large-scale agriculture, the 9RX farm tractor offers the brand's second-generation autonomy kit, featuring 16 individual cameras arranged in pods to enable a 360-degree view of the field. The advanced autonomy kit also calculates depth more accurately at larger distances, allowing the tractor to pull more equipment and drive faster.

For air blast spraying, the 5ML orchard tractor features the latest autonomy kit with added Lidar sensors to address the dense canopies found in orchards. The initial machine will be offered with a diesel engine. A battery electric tractor of comparable size and capacity to existing diesel 5M/ML models on the market today will follow.

For commercial landscaping, the brand's battery electric mower leverages the same camera technology as other John Deere autonomous machines but on a reduced scale since the machine has a smaller footprint. It has two cameras on the front, left, right and rear, 360-degree coverage is achieved, and staff can focus on other aspects of the job.

For quarry operations, the 460 P-Tier Autonomous Articulated Dump Truck utilizes a second-generation autonomous kit.

Select machines will be autonomously ready from the factory, and the second-generation perception system will be available as a retrofit kit for certain existing machines, providing customers with multiple paths to adoption based on where they are in their technology journey.

The machines are also managed via John Deere Operations Center Mobile, the company's cloud-based platform. By swiping left to right to start, the machine can be started once placed in the appropriate spot. Through the app, users also have access to live video, images, data and metrics, and the ability to adjust various factors like speed. In the event of any job quality anomalies or machine health issues, users will be notified remotely so they can make necessary adjustments.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/09/business/agribusiness/john-deere-launches-autonomous-models/2033393>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Full Nature Farms unveils new irrigation platform

By The Manila Times

January 9, 2025

FULL Nature Farms, a global leader in vertical farming and agricultural technology innovation, has launched its Rocket 2.0 Smart Irrigation Platform.

Rocket 2.0 has been honored with the prestigious Consumer Electronic Show (CES) 2025 Innovation Award in the Sustainability and Energy/Power category, marking a significant milestone in sustainable farming technology and underscoring Full Nature Farms' commitment to transforming global agricultural practices.



The Rocket 2.0 platform of Full Nature Farms is powered by the proprietary Adams 3.0 controller, proven reliable through numerous successful deployments. It ensures seamless performance, giving farmers precise control. FULL NATURE FARMS PHOTO

Since its founding in 2019, Full Nature Farms has established itself as a powerhouse in Hong Kong's agricultural technology sector, serving over 100 Michelin-starred restaurants and premium hotel groups.

"The launch of Rocket 2.0 and this recognition from CES marks a pivotal moment in our global expansion," said Ray Lok, CEO of Full Nature Farms. "As we grow our presence in North America

and beyond, Rocket 2.0 underscores our commitment to providing an affordable, data-driven farming solution for farmers that allows them to tackle agricultural water wastage effectively."

The company has formed strategic partnerships with leading agricultural institutions and technology providers worldwide to accelerate the adoption of smart farming solutions. With upcoming implementations across Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom, Full Nature Farms is expanding its North American presence to meet the growing demand for sustainable agricultural solutions. The company's proprietary technology stack, developed entirely in-house, has proven instrumental in executing dozens of successful agricultural projects globally for government departments, universities and private entities.

Developed through extensive research and real-world application in Full Nature Farms' successful vertical farming operations, Rocket 2.0 represents a quantum leap in agricultural water management. The platform integrates advanced sensor technology with artificial intelligence to deliver precise, automated irrigation control that significantly reduces water waste and improves crop yields.

Recognizing the inefficiencies in traditional outdoor irrigation systems that lead to excessive water and nutrient waste, and create millions of tons of unnecessary carbon emissions, Full Nature Farms has adapted its vertical farming technologies to address this global challenge affecting over 500 million farms worldwide.

Rocket 2.0 is a standalone innovative irrigation system that leverages crop, soil and climate sensors, combined with artificial intelligence and weather forecasts, to generate dynamic daily irrigation schedules. This results in optimized water usage, improved plant growth and health, and reduced labor costs. The system's innovative pricing structures eliminate barriers to entry, making advanced farming technologies accessible to commercial agriculture, from traditional outdoor operations to vineyards and market gardens.

Full Nature Farms' competitive advantage lies in its in-house developed technology ecosystem, including: advanced automation controllers and software; specialized LED grow lights; precision grow pipes and sensor systems; and integrated farm management platforms.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/01/09/business/agribusiness/full-nature-farms-unveils-new-irrigation-platform/2033391>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Farm, fisher jobs top employment decline

Cai U. Ordinario
January 9, 2025



FREQUENT typhoons brought by the era of climate change could lead to more job losses in the agriculture sector and threaten the country's food security in the process, according to local economists.

On Wednesday, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that while unemployment and underemployment improved, the number of employed Filipinos declined. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/08/typhoons-render-farmers-fisherfolk-jobless-in-november/>)

In terms of subsector, the decline in jobs was led by the Agriculture and forestry sector which saw a 1.99-million decline in jobs. The amount includes the 1.6-million jobs in elementary occupations such as farm laborers and fisherfolks.

“I think there are still typhoons expected to come in, so if that’s the case, we will continue to lose jobs in agri unless we improve on agrilogistics,” De La Salle University economist Maria Ella Oplas told BusinessMirror.

“There will definitely be a food security problem with the continuing typhoons unless we upgrade our agrologistics,” she added.

Oplas explained that agrologistics referred to planting, harvesting, sorting, grading, storage, transport, marketing, and others. In short, it is the “whole cycle” and a “comprehensive” approach to agriculture in the country.

Not surprising—Escucha

INSTITUTE for Economic Development and Economic Analysis (Idea) President Alex Escucha told BusinessMirror the job losses in the agriculture sector was no longer surprising. Apart from the typhoons, he said agriculture growth has not been robust.

Escucha said farm growth in the second and third quarters of 2024 contracted 2.3 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively. Palay growth even posted a double-digit decline at 12 percent in the third quarter.

With slow growth, Escucha said agriculture has not been able to attract job seekers and many children of farmers are also not keen on making agriculture their source of livelihood.

“Children of farmers choose not to pursue farming because of the very poor economic and financial returns,” Escucha told this newspaper on Wednesday.

The country’s economists, and even the President himself in his last State of the Nation Address (Sona), Escucha also said, have recognized that food security cannot be attained through self-sufficiency.

He said the lackluster performance of the farm sector and the growth of the population requires the country to not only improve food production but also supplement it with imports.

This is crucial, Escucha said, since the World Bank projects that the agriculture sector for the next 5 years is expected to grow by a percent or less.

Decline in agri, increase in others?

Meanwhile, Oplas said if there is a decline in jobs in the agriculture sector, this can also mean an increase in jobs in other sectors such as manufacturing and services.

Based on the latest PSA data, manufacturing as well as accommodation and food service activities were the industries that saw the largest increases in employment with an addition of 784,000 and 528,000 jobs, respectively.

For its part, the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said the government has recognized the challenges posed by calamities.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) will expand its cash-for-work and training programs to reach climate-vulnerable communities.

These programs include the Local Adaptation to Water Access (Lawa) and Breaking Insufficiency through Nutritious Harvest for the Impoverished (Binhi).

“The effective implementation of the Building on Social Protection for Anticipatory Action and Response in Emergencies and Disasters Program will help minimize the impact of flooding, typhoons, and droughts by preparing communities and implementing protective measures before disasters strike,” Balisacan added.

“The government complements these efforts by developing climate-resilient infrastructure and early warning systems to strengthen agricultural productivity and build long-term resilience.”

Moreover, the DSWD, in partnership with Neda and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), is currently developing a tool to better assess beneficiaries’ eligibility for the Ayuda Para sa Kapos ang Kita Program (Akap) and minimize leakage or duplication of aid. A process monitoring and impact evaluation mechanism will also form part of the program’s implementation to help ensure its efficiency and effectiveness.

“In line with these efforts, we remain committed to achieving our employment targets under the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028. The 2024 Philippine Development Report, which Neda will release this month, will guide our efforts with evidence-based strategies to create quality jobs and sustain economic growth,” the country’s chief economic planner said. Nonetheless, Balisacan said remains robust given the consistently high employment rates and reduced underemployment.

The latest Labor Force Survey showed a decline in the underemployment rate to 10.8 percent in November 2024 from 11.7 percent in November 2023, indicating better job quality and fewer workers seeking additional work hours or jobs.

“The next step is to expand business and employment opportunities to enable more Filipinos to actively and productively contribute to the economy,” Balisacan said.

“Moreover, we will encourage business upgrading and skills training programs to ensure that these jobs offer competitive wages as our workers raise their productivity by developing their human capital,” he added.

The labor force participation rate (LFPR) in November was 64.6 percent, lower than the estimated 65.9 percent for November 2023.

Youth LFPR declined to 32.4 percent, down from 34.4 percent in the same month last year. Many young individuals cited schooling (402,000) for not participating in the labor force.

Similarly, the female LFPR fell to 53.9 percent, down from 55.4 percent, primarily due to prime-working-age women prioritizing household responsibilities (445,000).

Neda stressed that a multifaceted approach to ensuring an efficient labor market. This approach involves enabling investments in quality job-generating sectors, enhancing skills and workforce mobility, and improving employment facilitation services.

SECRETARY’S STATEMENT

On the November 2024 Labor Force Survey

The November 2024 Labor Force Survey results reaffirm the administration’s unwavering commitment to generating quality employment opportunities and enhancing the livelihoods of all Filipinos. The employment rate has risen to 96.8% in November 2024, up from 96.4% in the same period last year. The number of employed persons increased by 1.385 million compared to October 2024. The unemployment rate has improved from 3.6% in November 2023 to 3.2% in November 2024, demonstrating positive results from ongoing efforts to create more job opportunities. The underemployment rate has also declined from 11.7% in November 2023 to 10.8% in November 2024. Despite these positive developments, challenges persist, such as technological advancements, adoption of artificial intelligence, and climate change, which have impact on youth and women labor force participation. In this regard, we note a decline year-on-year – from 6.92 million to 6.516 million, and 55.4% to 53.9%, respectively.

Key sectors such as manufacturing, accommodation and food services, health and social work, other services, and transportation have shown substantial growth, significantly contributing to job creation. This necessitates continuing efforts to enhance workforce engagement through various employment programs aimed at improving skills and job readiness.

The recently enacted Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises to Maximize Opportunities for Reinvigorating the Economy (CREATE MORE) Act is expected to generate additional income opportunities and stimulate economic growth. The Enterprise based Education and Training Framework Act addresses labor sector gaps by expanding training and upskilling programs in partnership with the private sector. With the enactment of the abovementioned laws, the Department will vigorously continue to foster inclusive growth and ensure equitable access to job opportunities, prioritizing the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce to equip Filipino workers with the necessary skills for today's dynamic job market. We have consistently updated our youth employability modules to meet industry standards to ensure the absorption of our young new entrants in the ranks of the employed.

Looking ahead to 2025, we anticipate a year of continued economic growth and job creation. DOLE will continue to enhance programs particularly for groups in vulnerable sectors and will remain steadfast towards the realization of a Bagong Pilipinas.

(sgd.)

BIENVENIDO E. LAGUESMA

Image credits: [PHOTO CREDIT TO QUANG NGUYEN VINH/PEXELS.COM](https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/09/farm-fisher-jobs-top-employment-decline/)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/09/farm-fisher-jobs-top-employment-decline/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DTI, DA unite to address high retail rice prices

Ada Pelonia
January 9, 2025

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) will ink a memorandum of understanding to fast-track efforts in tackling persistently high retail rice prices.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the collaboration would initially focus on imported rice, but noted that the government's efforts would extend beyond that.

“Imported rice is just the beginning. We plan to cast the price net wider to include other imported food commodities like vegetables and meat, ultimately benefiting the Filipino consumer,” Laurel said in a statement.

For her part, DTI Secretary Cristina Roque, who also chairs the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC), said she would soon convene the interagency council to review strategies aimed at taming food prices and ensuring fairness in the market. The DA is also part of the council.

“We aim to strike a balance between business sustainability and consumer protection. We want the public to know that we are leaving no stone unturned in our efforts to ease the burden on Filipino consumers,” Roque said.

Both agencies are also in talks to decide a maximum suggested retail price for rice, aimed at allowing rice importers and retailers to operate profitably while ensuring that consumers will not face excessive prices of the food staple.

Laurel recently told the BusinessMirror that the DA is mulling over the imposition of an MSRP on imported rice ranging from P42 to P55 per kilo.

He said the price range would be imposed on 25- and 5-percent broken rice varieties, adding that a “cheaper” price range would be suggested for the 100-percent broken rice variety.

Meanwhile, the agency noted that the DTI will review its existing regulations for selling and labeling manufactured goods and adapt them for agricultural commodities, particularly rice.

The DA earlier said it is considering declaring a national food security emergency, which would grant the agriculture chief the authority to release rice stocks held in reserve by the National Food Authority (NFA), noting that this would help increase supply and bring down retail prices.

The agency said elevated rice prices contributed to high inflation throughout the first half of 2024, which prevented the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) from lowering interest rates crucial for stimulating investments and generating jobs.

It added that on average, Filipino consumers spend nearly P10 of every P100 on rice, with the burden even greater for households in the bottom 30 percent of the income bracket.

“By tackling both supply and pricing issues, government aims to stabilize the rice market and make it more affordable for consumers nationwide.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/09/dti-da-unite-to-address-high-retail-rice-prices/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Typhoons render farmers, fisherfolk jobless in November

Cai U. Ordinario
January 8, 2025

Over a million Filipinos in elementary occupations — mostly in the agriculture sector — lost their jobs in November last year due to successive typhoons, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Based on the latest data, while the number of unemployed Filipinos declined to 1.66 million in November 2024, this was composed mostly of workers in elementary occupations at 1.6 million.

“Noong buwan ng Nobyembre kung saan nagkaroon tayo ng labor force survey, kung maaalala ninyo, lima yung typhoons na pumasok sa ating bansa mula November 1 hanggang November 18 and this affected our farmers and fisherfolks,” National Statistician Claire Dennis S. Mapa said in a briefing on Wednesday.

Mapa said some 148,000 elementary occupation jobs were lost in the fishing aquaculture subsector while 1.25 million were lost in crop farming which was composed of farm laborers.

Based on the data, the number of unemployed Filipinos was lower than the number of unemployed persons of 1.83 million in November 2023 and 1.97 million in October 2024.

“Substantial itong sa elementary occupations,” Mapa said. “Yung substantial drop year on year in elementary occupation category ay galing doon sa agriculture and fisheries subsectors.”

Meanwhile, the number of employed individuals in November 2024 was recorded at 49.54 million, lower than the estimated number of employed persons of 49.64 million in November 2023. In October 2024, the number of employed individuals was posted at 48.16 million.

The reported Labor Force Participation Rate in November 2024 translates to a total of 51.2 million Filipinos aged 15 years old and over who were in the labor force, or those who were either employed or unemployed.

The number of individuals aged 15 years old and over who were in the labor force was 51.47 million in November 2023 and 50.12 million in October 2024.

The data, however, showed in terms of magnitude, 5.35 million of the 49.54 million employed individuals in November 2024 expressed the desire to have additional hours of work in their present job or to have additional job, or to have a new job with longer hours of work.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/08/typhoons-render-farmers-fisherfolk-jobless-in-november/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Costly goods seen spurring search for gigs, better jobs

Cai U. Ordinario
January 8, 2025



A vendor at Marikina Public Market displays a single tomato priced at P20 on Tuesday, January 7, 2024. Tomato prices in the market currently range from P240 to P280 per kilo, driven by “extensive damage” to crops caused by last year’s typhoons, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA). This calamity had previously pushed prices as high as P350 per kilo. The DA remains optimistic that prices will stabilize with the onset of the dry season.

Faster inflation has not only prompted Filipinos to scrimp on goods and services but it may also push them to look for better jobs or an additional source of income to prevent them from falling below the poverty line, according to economists.

On Tuesday, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that inflation accelerated to 2.9 percent in December 2024 and averaged 3.2 percent in 2024. (See:

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/07/inflation-surges-to-2-9-in-dec-2024-fastest-since-aug-2024-psa/>)

Data obtained from the PSA showed the increase in inflation has eroded the value of a hundred peso to P79. This means, Filipinos need to shell out P121 today to purchase P100 worth of goods in 2018.

“As real incomes fall, people are getting [fewer] goods than they did before. Since inflation affects the middle income households heavily, we expect poverty to increase,” Ateneo de Manila University economist Leonardo Lanzona told BusinessMirror.

“In the process, this increase in

poverty is linked to underemployment as workers will now be looking for secondary jobs. We often associate underemployment with low quality jobs, but we often fail to see that this is also associated with poverty,” he added.

Higher prices and the lower value of the peso will be a challenge for Filipinos, according to Unionbank Chief Economist Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion.

This, he said, means the policy challenge moving forward is to keep inflation in check, particularly for food. It can be noted that food has a weight of 34.78 percent in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

“In addition to lower purchasing power, the weaker PHP [Philippine peso], anticipated external headwinds from US leadership changes, and geopolitical risks are potential drags to job generation and efforts to increase incomes especially this year,” Asuncion told this newspaper.

National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) Policy and Planning Undersecretary Rosemarie G. Edillon told BusinessMirror that the more important metric is real wages or real income than purchasing power.

This, she said, is the reason for Neda’s efforts to “closely monitor” the trend in real wages. Edillon said, based on their monitoring, real wages nationwide has been increasing.

However, Edillon said there are factors that complicate the rise in wages and this has to do with changes in preferences. With higher incomes, persons can opt to get better quality products or services which cost more.

“A confounding issue, though, is that preferences may have changed corresponding to the increase in real wages or real income. If that is the case, then individuals would perceive their incomes to still be not enough,” Edillon told BusinessMirror.

Negative rice inflation

National Statistician Claire Dennis Mapa said for January 2025, the expectation is for rice to post negative inflation on the back of base effects.

Mapa noted that rice, which posted an inflation of 0.8 percent in December 2024, will likely fall into negative territory. January marked the first month in 2024 that rice inflation posted increase of over 20 percent.

Rice price inflation experienced by All Income Households averaged 22.6 percent in January 2024, the highest since the 22.9 percent posted in March 2009.

The PSA also said inflation accelerated to 24.8 percent for the poorest Filipinos or the Bottom 30 percent of households in January 2024. This is the highest in the series which began in 2013.

“Nakita natin last year ‘yung peak ng presyo sa bigas. For example, let’s just do the regular milled rice, ‘yung regular milled rice, average price natin [noong] Disyembre 2024, ay nasa about P48.81 per kilo, national ‘yun,” Mapa said.

“Kung titingnan natin, January 2024, ‘yung simula ng taon, ang average price nito ay nasa P49.65. So yung December price is already lower than the January price that’s why we’re seeing the trend going down. So, ito nga ‘yung sinasabi kong may possibility na mag-negative ang inflation for rice this January,” he added.

Former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante B. Canlas told BusinessMirror that this decline in rice price may be attributed to the arrival of more imports.

These imports, Lanzona said, beefed up the supply of rice in December, causing the pace of price increase to slow considerably.

“The significant slowdown on rice inflation is because of the reduced tariff and higher volume [overall] of supply of rice. It is still very much a sellers’ market meaning that the variability is more due to the supply side,” Edillon told BusinessMirror.

“The top contributors to December inflation are vegetables [perhaps due to supply constraints], food and beverage serving services and rentals. The latter two may indicate improvements in living standard. To be sure, we need a longer time series, plus the FIES [Family Income and Expenditure Survey] data,” she added.

‘Within target’

In separate statements, Neda and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said the latest inflation print was within the target set by the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC).

In its meeting in December 2024, the DBCC said the government has retained its annual inflation target of 2 to 4 percent in 2025 up to 2028. The DBCC estimated that full year inflation would be between 3.1 to 3.3 percent in 2024.

“Despite the risks we encountered throughout the year, our combined efforts to temper inflation have largely been successful. We will build upon this momentum as we commit to keep the inflation rate within our target range in 2025,” said Neda Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan.

In its last policy meeting for the year, the BSP’s risk-adjusted inflation forecast increased to 3.4 percent from 3.3 percent in the previous meeting. For 2026, the risk-adjusted forecast is unchanged at 3.7 percent.

“The within-target inflation outlook and well-anchored inflation expectations continue to support the BSP’s shift toward less restrictive monetary policy. Nonetheless, the monetary authority will continue to closely monitor the emerging upside risks to inflation, notably geopolitical factors,” the BSP said.

The BSP said some of the upside risks to inflation include higher transport fares and electricity rates. Downside risks are lower import tariffs on rice and subdued domestic demand.

The central bank said private domestic spending is expected to be supported by easing inflation and improving labor market conditions. But the risks linked to the external environment could materialize and temper economic activity and market sentiment.

“In pursuit of price stability, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas maintains a calibrated approach to its monetary policy easing while the relevant agencies continue to pursue measures to ensure adequate food supply and affordable prices,” Balisacan said.

“We are intensifying efforts to improve productivity, encourage innovation, and build resilience toward ensuring food security and protecting consumers’ purchasing power. This will enable us to foster stronger and more inclusive economic growth, allowing Filipinos to move closer to realizing a matatag, maginhawa, at panatag na buhay,” he added.

Meanwhile, Neda said to complement existing measures to ensure water and food security amid climate risks, the Department of Social Welfare and Development will expand the reach of its Local Adaptation to Water Access (LAWA) and Breaking Insufficiency through Nutritious Harvest for the Impoverished (BINHI) projects to 323 cities and municipalities across 67 provinces by 2025.

The recent amendment of the Agricultural Tariffication Law under Republic Act 12078 is expected to enhance the rice sector’s resilience as the funds allocated for the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund increased to P30 billion from P10 billion annually until 2031.

Moreover, to further support the hog industry’s recovery, the Neda-chaired Inter-agency Committee on Inflation and Market Outlook and the Economic Development Group recommended that the Department of Agriculture facilitate the timely and continuous withdrawal of frozen pork stocks in cold storages and for the Food and Drug Administration to fast-track the approval of African swine fever vaccines for commercial use.

Furthermore, the Energy Regulatory Commission directed all private distribution utilities, including the Manila Electric Company or Meralco, to refund unspent regulatory reset fees collected from consumers. The total refund is estimated at P1.18 billion.

Image credits: [Nonoy Lacza](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/08/costly-goods-seen-spurring-search-for-gigs-better-jobs/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

PHL food staple cheaper in December–PSA

Ada Pelonia
January 8, 2025



Rice prices were lower in December, latest data released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed.

Figures from the PSA indicated that the average wholesale price of regular milled rice dropped by 5.9 percent to P43.14 per kilo last month, from 45.83 per kilo a year ago.

The fastest decline in regular milled rice was recorded in Soccsksargen where the quotation of the staple fell by 9.8 percent to P41.87 per kilogram, from P46.41 per kg in the previous year.

This was followed by Western Visayas where the prices dipped by 9.1 percent last month to P39.32 per kilo from P43.27 per kilo in December 2023.

Based on PSA data, the average price in December was also 1.7 percent lower than the P43.89 per kilo recorded in November.

Meanwhile, the PSA said the price of well-milled rice also shrank by 4.1 percent to P47.08 per kilo last month, from P49.11 a year ago.

The fastest decrease was also registered in Soccsksargen where prices of the food staple dipped by 10.2 percent to P43.57 per kilo in December from P48.53 per kilo in the previous year.

Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) trailed where prices declined by 9.5 percent last month to P45.10 per kilo from P49.81 per kilo in December 2023.

The average price of well-milled rice was also 1.4 percent lower than the P47.75 per kilo registered in November.

“Wholesale price refers to the price of commodity transacted in bulk for further resale or processing,” the PSA said.

“It is the actual ‘spot’ transaction price received usually by the wholesalers, distributors or marketing agents for large lots but net of discounts, allowances, and rebates.”

The agency said the monthly data on the average wholesale prices for agricultural commodities are obtained from the results of the Wholesale Price Survey of Selected Agricultural Commodities conducted every week of the reference month.

Image credits: [Nonie Reyes](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/08/phl-food-staple-cheaper-in-december-psa/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

PCA taps UPLB for coconut replanting program

Ada Pelonia
January 8, 2025



File photo: The iconic Acacia tree at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) takes center stage in Paskong UPLB 2024. Adorned with shimmering blue Christmas lights, the tree creates a magical glow, adding a festive accent to the campus grounds. A popular spot for students and visitors, it lights up not just the night but also countless social media feeds.

The Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) sought the help of University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) to bolster the agency’s coconut planting and replanting programs.

The PCA led by Administrator Dexter Buted held a meeting with the UPLB College of Agriculture and Food Science (CAFS) Dean Amado Angeles last Monday where they discussed the possibility of designating UPLB as a strategic site for planting coconut seedlings, strengthening its years-long commitment to supporting coconut-related programs.

According to Buted, the engagement with UPLB is part of the agency’s “whole-of-the-nation” approach, which seeks to involve key institutions, stakeholders, and communities in achieving the agency’s goal of planting and replanting millions of coconut trees nationwide.

“UPLB, known for its role in advancing the agricultural sector, has long been a reliable partner of the authority, particularly in accommodating coconut-related projects, such as the cultivation of new coconut hybrids at its experimental farms,” PCA said.

“Over the years, UPLB has also been at the forefront of efforts aimed at safeguarding and revitalizing the coconut industry, leveraging its expertise in agricultural innovation and research.”

The agency noted that this renewed partnership reflects the crucial role of academic institutions in driving sustainable agricultural initiatives and advancing the growth of the coconut industry.

Known as the tree of life, the coconut is an important cash crop in the Philippines. For instance, copra—the dried sections of the meat of the coconut—is integral to the goal of the government to cut the prices of animal feeds.

Recently, the Department of Agriculture (DA) announced that it has expanded its copra meal project to Western Visayas to provide a cheaper protein source alternative for animal feeds in the region.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he ordered the expansion of the Protein-Enriched Copra Meal (PECM) commercialization project to the region to boost local livestock production.

He said this development is expected to benefit local farmers and feed producers in the region who have been grappling with rising prices for traditional feed ingredients.

“The program not only helps reduce feed costs but also supports the local economy by creating new markets for coconut by-products, which are often underutilized,” Laurel said in a statement.

The PECM project was initially rolled out in Calabarzon and Soccsksargen in 2022 as a response to supply disruptions caused by Covid-19 and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

It was designed to temper the rising costs of animal feed by using copra meal—a byproduct of coconut farming—as a cheaper substitute for imported soybean meal, which has become increasingly expensive due to global supply chain issues.

The agency said PECM was engineered through a solid-state fermentation process, developed by the UPLB Biotech Center, which enhances copra meal’s protein content to about 45 percent. This percentage is comparable to soybean meal which is a crucial component in animal feeds.

Image credits: [NONIE REYES](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/08/pca-taps-uplb-for-coconut-replanting-program/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

India considers lifting ban on trade in some crop futures

BusinessMirror
January 8, 2025

India is considering revoking a three-year ban on futures trading in seven farm commodities, including wheat and unprocessed rice, after studies found the steps were counterproductive, according to a person with knowledge of the matter.

A government panel recommended ending the suspension, after the findings showed that restrictions imposed in 2021 to tame costs had instead disrupted market-price discovery, the person said, asking not to be identified as the discussions are private. Local crop rates have also stabilized following fresh harvests, the person said.

A final decision will be taken by a group of ministers in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration, which will then ask the Securities and Exchange Board of India to lift the curbs or extend them beyond the existing January 31 deadline. Emails sent to the finance ministry and the capital markets regulator weren't immediately answered.

A revocation would be another step by the world's leading grain and sugar producer to ease pandemic-era restrictions on several farm goods. After Modi this year won a third term, his government lifted a ban on export of some rice varieties, and sold grains from state reserves.

India started its clampdown some three years ago to ensure a steady supply of grains for a welfare program to provide free wheat and rice to about 800 million people, as inflation hit a three-decade high on rising food prices. It curbed exports of wheat, sugar and rice, discouraged hoarding, and imposed storage limits. The moves roiled world markets and angered local farmers.

A study commissioned by SEBI concluded that the ban on agricultural commodities, including chickpeas, rapeseed, soybeans, green gram and crude palm oil, harmed both futures and spot markets, and prices continued to rise, the person said. The report also highlighted that every suspension led to greater trust deficit in the derivatives market, making it more difficult to attract investors, the person said.

La Niña in Argentina

A La Niña weather pattern that wreaked havoc on Argentina's farms just two years ago was expected to be kinder this time around. But as the growing season gets under way, a long bout of dry weather is emerging again.

Growers are struggling with an incipient drought and need rain in the coming weeks to avoid losses to soybean and corn crops. La Niña, which typically brings dryness to Argentina, is suddenly on the lips of farmers across the prime growing belt.

"All I'm reading in the messaging groups are cries for water," said Francisco Perkins, a grower in Pehuajo. "It could get ugly."

La Niña is a serious issue in Argentina, the world's No. 1 provider of processed soy meal and oil. The nation's soy crop was devastated by a La Niña-fueled drought during the 2022-23 season, slashing the harvest to the smallest since the turn of the century.

"We're at an inflection point," said grower Santiago Olano in Intendente Alvear. "Plants' demand for water is about to seriously ramp up, but there are no reserves in the soil. If significant rains don't come in the next two weeks, yields will fall."

The weather pattern is returning this season just as growers grapple with a poor economic backdrop, including low prices and a strong local currency. That's pushed down their profit margins to lows not seen in a decade, according to a research report by Buenos Aires brokerage house Latin Securities.

Tighter agricultural harvests also may hurt President Javier Milei's bid for a sustained rebound in the economy.

Plants on the Pampas are already off to a poor start. The soybean crop is harvested in the second quarter and requires rain in January and February to perform well.

"Over spring and the first days of summer, La Niña has begun to make itself felt, producing water deficits across a large part of the farming region," Eduardo Sierra, a climatologist with the Buenos Aires Grain Exchange, wrote in a Tuesday report.

The forecasts aren't good. Weather maps published by Sierra predict lower-than-average rainfall through March.

“The expectation is for spotty rains, which would affect crop growth in key areas,” Cecilia Conde, the bourse’s chief estimates analyst, said in a phone message. To be sure, she said, several corners of the Pampas are OK.

The Rosario Board of Trade, which tends to be quicker than its rivals in revising crop figures, is scheduled to publish its monthly estimates report on Wednesday. Its current forecast is for between 53 million and 53.5 million metric tons.

“Soy and corn are doing relatively well for now,” said Santiago Fernandez de Maussion, a farmer in Jesus Maria, Cordoba province. “I hope the drought doesn’t come up this way.” *Bloomberg News*

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/08/india-considers-lifting-ban-on-trade-in-some-crop-futures/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

GEF approves \$68M for agrifood systems solutions

BusinessMirror
January 8, 2025

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) said it helped 22 countries unlock \$68 million in financing from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to address biodiversity loss, groundwater management, climate change, land degradation, and pollution.

FAO announced in December that the projects were approved by the GEF Secretariat and Councils for the GEF Trust Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), and the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) meeting this week in Washington D.C.

The projects expect to leverage an additional \$273 million in co-financing to advance global goals for biodiversity, social inclusion, land and water management, and reducing use of hazardous chemicals.

“The approval of this batch of projects comes at the end of a year of environmental summits that highlighted both the need for finance to unlock transformation of global agrifood systems to this critical agenda,” said Qu Dongyu, FAO director-general.

“We look forward to supporting countries to meet their biodiversity, climate, land, water, and pollution goals through agrifood systems solutions under the overall guidance of the Four Betters.”

“These projects will help change the way we produce our food, fuel, and fiber to address global environmental crises. They will enhance coherence between agricultural and environmental sectors and support countries and communities to tackle environmental challenges, food insecurity, and poverty. With this new financing in place, it is now equally important to their success to effectively communicate their goals and impacts,” said Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, CEO and Chairperson, GEF.

As part of the funding, the council approved a \$19-million allocation for FAO’s first activities as a new implementing agency for the Small Grants Program.

The project builds upon 30 years of impact by bringing FAO's expertise in working with smallholder producers to support civil society organizations and community-based organizations in co-designing and delivering locally led initiatives.

It will develop strategies, provide financial and technical assistance, and foster South-South Cooperation, with a strong focus on innovation, scalability, and social inclusion of women, Indigenous Peoples and youth.

The project will work with local organizations across 14 countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Cook Islands, Cuba, Guyana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Marshall Islands, Nicaragua, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda and Venezuela. It aims to restore 20,000 hectares of land, improve practices across 350,000 hectares, and benefit 45,000 people.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/08/gef-approves-68m-for-agrifood-systems-solutions/>