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MANILA BULLETIN:

₱29 rice coming to MerryMart: DA partnership aims to ease inflation burden

BY DEXTER BARRO II

Jan 31, 2025 02:49 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Grocery store chain operator MerryMart Grocery Centers Inc. has entered into an agreement with the Department of Agriculture (DA) to sell rice at affordable prices, as low as ₱29 per kilo, in its establishments.

Grocery store chain operator MerryMart Grocery Centers Inc. has entered into an agreement with the Department of Agriculture (DA) to sell rice at affordable prices, as low as ₱29 per kilo, in its establishments. DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for this partnership on Friday, Jan. 31, with MerryMart President Jacqueline Anna Marie Gomez.

Laurel said this marks the agency's first-ever collaboration with a major grocery chain in the country since announcing plans to expand the availability of affordable rice options nationwide.

"We need more good corporate citizens like MerryMart who are ready to extend a helping hand to assist the government in looking after the welfare of Filipinos, especially those who need relief from unwarranted price pressures," he said.

The partnership between the DA and MerryMart will focus on the Kadiwa ng Pangulo (KNP) program—which offers the ₱29 rice and the Rice-for-All (RFA) program.

Under the RFA, various rice grades will be made available including RFA5 or the five percent broken priced at ₱45-per-kilo; RFA 25 or the 25 percent broken at ₱38; and RFA 100 or the 100 percent broken at ₱36.

The ₱29 rice, meanwhile, will be sold exclusively for the country's vulnerable sectors.

Food Terminal Inc. (FTI), a state-owned corporation, shall coordinate the supply and packaging of rice for MerryMart.

Laurel said this is at "no cost for the government or the Department of Agriculture".

As part of the MOU, MerryMart is also set to launch the MerryRice promo for all consumers, with rice available at ₱29 per kilo. This will run from Feb. 1 to March 31, 2025.

According to the company, the rice supply for this promo will come from local farmers.

MerryMart stated that this initiative is a component of its corporate social responsibility for Filipino families, especially those struggling with inflation.

The DA, meanwhile, said this partnership aligns with the government's food security agenda, especially in ensuring that basic necessities are accessible at reasonable prices.

Under the agreement, the agency and the company have committed to do joint promotional strategies and media campaigns, as well as provide technical support for the rollout of such programs.

In addition to rice, the DA is also keen on distributing additional agri-fishery products across MerryMart-identified stores.

While the agreement has been signed, the agency clarified that the MOU "does not impose any legally binding obligations" between the two parties.

The agreement will remain valid until Dec. 31, 2028. This is subject to amendments or termination by either party with prior notice.

Earlier, the Agriculture Secretary met with representatives of supermarkets, groceries, and convenience stores to encourage their support in widening the distribution of cheaper rice.

Laurel noted that these stores are crucial in reaching millions of consumers on a daily basis.

The DA said it is considering over 3,200 retail outlets across the country, including SM, Robinsons, Puregold, and 7-Eleven.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/31/da-taps-merry-mart-to-seal-1st-retail-partnership-to-sell-affordable-rice>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA seen to declare food security emergency for rice on Tuesday

BY DEXTER BARRO II

Jan 31, 2025 01:31 PM

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is targeting Tuesday, Feb. 4, for the declaration of a food security emergency for rice amid persistently high prices of the staple Filipino food.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said the agency is in receipt of the National Price Coordinating Council's (NPCC) resolution recommending the declaration.

“Natanggap na ng opisina ko kahapon while I was still in the US (United States), ‘yung resolution that I have to sign as part of the board. Then, by Tuesday malamang we will declare the rice emergency,” Laurel told reporters on Friday, Jan. 31.

[My office received the resolution yesterday while I was still in the US, which I have to sign as part of the board. Then, by Tuesday, we will most likely be declaring the rice emergency.]

Laurel said the following day, on Wednesday, will likely see the start of the National Food Authority's (NFA) rollout of its rice buffer stock.

He added that he will be meeting with the NFA, Food Terminal Inc. (FTI), and Kadiwa ng Pangulo (KNP) to deliberate on plans regarding the implementation of the food emergency.

Following the declaration, the DA projects stability in rice prices in the market as the NFA sells rice through KNP stores, local government units (LGUs), and other government agencies.

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

Releasing these reserves is expected to help decongest warehouses in preparation for the upcoming February harvest.

“[The declaration] is very welcome dahil mababawasan na ang mga laman ng warehouses at matutuwa na rin ang ating mga farmers na makakabili na ang NFA ng bigas mula sa kanila dahil mayro'n nang paglalagyan,” said Laurel, chairman of the NFA Council.

[The declaration is very welcome because it will reduce the stock in warehouses, and our farmers will also be pleased that the NFA can now buy rice from them since there will be storage space available.]

With the upcoming rice harvest season, the NFA is set to procure palay or unmilled rice at P23 per kilo. Aside from keeping prices stable, the DA chief said the food emergency declaration could also trigger lower prices.

“Releasing 300,000 tons of rice to the market within six months, I think, will soften the market at hopefully bumaba nang kaunti pa ‘yung presyo ng bigas [*hopefully bring down the price of rice a little further*],” he added.

While there are still no concrete plans for the rollout of NFA's stocks, Laurel said the priority will be areas near warehouses to minimize freight costs.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/31/food-security-emergency-on-rice-seen-on-feb-4-da-chief-says>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Key officials push for holistic approach in combating illicit tobacco trade

BY MANILA BULLETIN

Jan 31, 2025 11:43 AM

Government officials, industry leaders, and policymakers have called for a holistic and multi-sectoral approach to curb the rising illicit tobacco trade in the country.



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel

Speaking at the 2nd International Tobacco Summit organized by the National Tobacco Administration (NTA), officials stressed that a combination of policy reforms, regional cooperation, enforcement efforts and industry are all needed to address the problem of illicit trade.

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, in a speech delivered by Undersecretary Roger Navarro, underscored the need for a united front against illicit trade.

“Protecting and supporting our local tobacco industry is crucial for the livelihoods it sustains in the countryside and the economic stability it provides,” he said.

Laurel said that collaboration among policymakers, regulators, and law enforcement agencies is critical.

“It is imperative for our government to adopt a holistic approach to this issue. We urge all stakeholders, public and private sector, to unite in our efforts and to further strengthen our strategies against illicit tobacco trade while supporting and empowering our local farmers,” he said.

While he acknowledged the role of excise taxes in protecting public health and generating revenue, this had the unintended consequence of driving consumers toward the illicit market.

“While excise taxes are designed to protect public health and generate government revenues, they may have inadvertently contributed to the growth of illicit trade which undermines the legitimate tobacco industry and the welfare of our farmers,” he added.

The rise of illicit tobacco trade in the Philippines mirrors a broader regional trend. According to Jericho Nograles, President of the Philippine Tobacco Institute (PTI), the share of illicit cigarettes in the Philippine market surged from 5.4% in 2020 to 16.4% in 2024—an increase of over 200% in just four years. He shares that by 2025, illicit products are projected to account for nearly 19% of the market.

“Illicit trade is not just an industry challenge; it is a national and regional crisis. It undermines public health, weakens government revenues, destabilizes legitimate businesses, and fuels organized crime,” Nograles said.

He cited several key factors contributing to the rise of illicit trade, including the significant price gap between legal and illegal tobacco products, geographic vulnerabilities due to the Philippines’ extensive coastline, and the presence of organized crime groups engaged in smuggling and other illicit activities. “Legal cigarettes in the Philippines cost an average of PHP 170 per pack, while illicit products are sold for as little as PHP 40 per pack. This significant price disparity encourages consumers, particularly those from lower-income groups, to purchase cheaper, illegal alternatives,” Nograles said.

Nograles emphasized that enforcement alone is insufficient in tackling the problem. He outlined several policy recommendations, including a temporary moratorium on excise tax increases to address the affordability gap, regional cooperation among ASEAN member states to share intelligence and coordinate enforcement strategies, and the implementation of advanced track-and-trace systems for supply chain transparency.

“Enforcement alone will not solve this issue. It requires a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach that addresses the root causes of smuggling, stabilizes taxation, and fosters regional cooperation,” he stressed.

Despite the challenges posed by illicit trade, the tobacco industry remains a key revenue source for the Philippine government. From January to November 2024, tax collections from tobacco amounted to PHP 128.98 billion, while vape products contributed PHP 1.35 billion—more than triple the previous year’s collection.

Office of the Special Assistant to the President for Investment and Economic Affairs Secretary Frederick Go, in a speech read by Undersecretary Jose Guilas, underscored the industry’s economic contributions.

“Beyond tax contributions, the tobacco industry also provides livelihoods for approximately 2 million Filipinos, driving economic activity and supporting communities across the country.”

Go noted recent legislative measures aimed at strengthening the industry, including Republic Act No. 12022, the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act.

“We are exploring regional partnerships and free trade agreements to enhance the presence of Philippine-grown tobacco on the world stage,” he added.

Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman, in a recorded speech, also commended the enactment of RA No. 12022 as a crucial measure against hoarding, smuggling, and other illicit activities.

“Through this law, we will prevent the entry of smuggled tobacco, ensuring that correct duties and taxes are paid while imposing higher penalties,” she said.

National Tobacco Administration (NTA) Administrator Belinda Sanchez reinforced the need for a holistic strategy.

“The increasing illicit trade in tobacco is a growing concern, undermining our efforts and threatening the livelihoods of countless individuals,” she said.

“We need a holistic approach to tackle this problem, one that addresses not just the symptoms but also the root causes. A multifaceted approach that combines regulation, education, and community engagement,” Sanchez added.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/31/key-officials-push-for-holistic-approach-in-combating-illicit-tobacco-trade>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Salceda: 'Murang Pagkain' panel's task vital based on Philippines' 2024 GDP performance

BY ELLSON QUISMORIO

Jan 31, 2025 11:03 AM

AT A GLANCE

- The implications of the Philippine's gross domestic product (GDP) performance in 2024 has emboldened Albay 2nd district Rep. Joey Salceda as to the importance of the House quinta-committee's (quinta-comm) work.



Albay 2nd district Rep. Joey Salceda (Rep. Salceda's office)

The implications of the Philippine's gross domestic product (GDP) performance in 2024 has emboldened Albay 2nd district Rep. Joey Salceda as to the importance of the House quinta-committee's (quinta-comm) work.

In a statement, Salceda said, "5.6 percent is solid growth considering the global challenges. That said, we need to sort out government spending, which grew slower than our nominal GDP growth targets."

This was after the country posted a full-year GDP growth of 5.6 percent last year.

Salceda, overall chairman of the quinta-comm, also known as the "Murang Pagkain Super-committee", reckoned that "Food must be agenda number one for all of government."

"There are signs that consumers have shifted away from discretionary expenses that cause economic growth and towards more basic food items like rice," said the economist-lawmaker.

"That is why the work of the Murang Pagkain Super-committee is critical to achieving faster growth in 2025. People need to be able to afford food first before they feel confident to spend on other things," he underscored.

Formed in the current 19th Congress under House Speaker Martin Romualdez, the quinta-comm has carried out five public hearings so far.

It has been focused on helping the Marcos administration reduce the prices of rice--the Filipino staple food.

Recently, the Murang Pagkain Super-committee took to task the Department of Agriculture (DA) for setting a rather hefty maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for rice at P58 per kilo.

This infuriated panel members especially after it was learned in the course of the hearings that the staple grain could theoretically be sold at under P40 at detail.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/1/31/salceda-murang-pagkain-panel-s-task-vital>

MANILA BULLETIN:

4Ps graduates to receive continued gov't support—DSWD chief

BY JEL SANTOS

Feb 1, 2025 06:41 PM



Graduating members of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) will continue receiving government support to help them stay out of poverty, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary Rex Gatchalian said.

Speaking at the Trabaho sa Bagong Pilipinas job fair on Jan. 31 at the Rizal Memorial Stadium, Gatchalian emphasized the government's commitment to supporting 4Ps beneficiaries even after they exit the program.

"Naatasan kami ng ating mahal na Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr...para masiguro na yung mga 4Ps graduates natin o yung mga benepisyaryo na maaring lumabas na sa programa ay patuloy na masubay-bayan ang inyong mga pangangailangan (We have been tasked by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to ensure that our 4Ps graduates, or beneficiaries who may be exiting the program, continue to receive support for their needs)," he said.

"Kasama dyan ang makahanap ng trabaho at masiguro na hindi na kayo babalik muli sa kahirapan (This includes helping them find jobs and ensuring that they do not fall back into poverty)," he went on.

The job fair, organized in partnership with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), was attended by 94 employers offering job opportunities to 4Ps beneficiaries.

The DSWD said that several 4Ps graduates were hired on the spot, including Jhaycel Mara from Pasay City, who secured a job as a cashier at a sports apparel store.

Mark Benedict Inocencio, another former 4Ps monitored child, was also hired as a bagger at a shopping mall in Manila.

Various government agencies, including the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), were present to provide pre-employment assistance.

Meanwhile, Kadiwa ng Pangulo stalls set up by the Department of Agriculture (DA) offered affordable basic goods to attendees.

The DSWD said it will continue monitoring 4Ps graduates to ensure they do not fall back into poverty and will help them find stable employment and economic opportunities.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/1/4-ps-graduates-to-receive-continued-gov-t-support-dswd-chief>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

EDITORIAL — Destabilizers

The Philippine Star

February 1, 2025 | 12:00am



The petitioners are known to be allied with a group that has openly called for the ouster of President Marcos. But the concerns they have brought to the Supreme Court in connection with the 2025 General Appropriations Act are shared by many others who are not affiliated in any way with the Dutertes, their ally Davao City 3rd District Rep. Isidro Ungab and Marcos' first executive secretary, Vic Rodriguez. Commenting on the petition to declare the GAA unconstitutional, the President said he couldn't find the "damned blank items" in the budget measure – over 4,000 pages long – that he signed into law before 2024 ended. Of course he wouldn't, because the 28 blank items were in about 13 pages of the bicameral conference committee report on the GAA. Most of the blank items were for projects of the Department of Agriculture.

Apart from the blank items in the bicam report, the petition is questioning Congress' denial of subsidy to the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. and bloating of the budget for the Department of Public Works and Highways, whose allocation became higher than for the entire education sector. To the education sector, Congress included the appropriations for learning institutions that used to be part of other executive departments, among them the Philippine Military Academy, Philippine National Police Academy, National Defense College of the Philippines, Philippine Public Safety College and the Local Government Academy.

Even the Philippine Science High School, which is an attached agency of the Department of Science and Technology, was lumped under the education sector for funding.

Congressmen and senators drastically reworked the National Expenditure Program prepared by the executive and awarded themselves hefty increases in their allocations, tripled their new pork barrel under the unprogrammed appropriations, cut the conditional cash transfer funding by P50 billion and created an unconditional aid program whose distribution they can claim credit for during the campaign period, the Ayuda sa Kapos ang Kita Program.

AKAP duplicates the purposes of another unconditional aid program that politicians also use for self-promotion, the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations or AICS.

Since the enactment of the mangled budget, Malacañang has been scrounging for sources of funding to ensure that affected programs and projects of the executive agencies will still push through this year after lawmakers impounded the funds for their personal purposes.

This mangling of the NEP painstakingly prepared by the executive and the abuse of the congressional power of the purse are destabilizing the country. The nation cannot afford to see this destabilization repeated. Instead of presidential condemnation, the issue deserves to be challenged by more people before the Supreme Court.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2025/02/01/2418291/editorial-destabilizers>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Food security emergency may be declared on February 4

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

February 1, 2025 | 12:00am



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

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — A food security emergency can be declared on Tuesday, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said after he formally received the approved resolution of the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC).

Under the newly enacted Republic Act 12078 or the Agricultural Tariffication Act, the Department of Agriculture (DA) – upon the recommendation of the NPCC – may declare a food security emergency to address supply shortages or extraordinary increases in rice prices.

“By Tuesday, we will be declaring the food security emergency. I did not see the entire document, but I saw the signature of the chairman,” Tiu Laurel said yesterday, referring to Trade Secretary Maria Cristina Roque who serves as head of the NPCC.

According to Tiu Laurel, he will meet with officials of the National Food Authority (NFA), Food Terminal Inc. and Kadiwa to look at the plans for the rollout.

“This (food security emergency) will be nationwide,” he noted.

Tiu Laurel said the NFA can start selling its rice stocks at P36 per kilo to local government units, which can resell it at P38 per kilo.

“We can now have space for our procurement of palay as we can release the 300,000 tons of rice to the market within six months and hopefully bring down the retail price of rice,” Tiu Laurel said.

He gave assurance that the DA can justify the legality of the food security emergency if it will be questioned in court.

The DA originally planned to declare a food security emergency today but did not meet its target after the delay in the transmittal of the approved resolution of the NPCC.

Aside from the food security emergency, the DA has implemented a maximum suggested retail price of P58 after Executive Order 62, which lowered the tariff on imported grains, failed to bring down the retail price of rice.

Farmers' group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) said the retail price of rice remains high at P61 per kilo despite the drop of its landed cost to P32 per kilo following the decrease in world market price to \$460 per metric ton.

"If you include \$460 the plus \$30 freight cost and the 15 percent tariff, more or less the landed cost is only P32.90 per kilo for five percent broken," SINAG chairman Rosendo So said.

"Despite the drop in the price of rice in the world market, the retail price of imported rice did not go down," So added.

So pushed for the lifting of EO 62 after the scheduled review of the National Economic and Development Authority by February, which will bring back the 35 percent tariff.

Based on monitoring of the DA in Metro Manila markets, the retail price of imported special rice was still sold as high as P61 per kilo; imported premium rice, as high as P58 per kilo; imported well-milled rice, P52 per kilo and imported regular milled rice, P48 per kilo.

Meanwhile, MerryMart Grocery Centers Inc. has partnered with the DA for the rollout of P29-per-kilo rice in selected outlets to expand its availability in the country.

The DA and MerryMart signed a memorandum of understanding stipulating the participation of MerryMart in the government's flagship Kadiwa ng Pangulo program that aims to provide consumers with cheaper rice option.

The sale of the rice in MerryMart outlets may begin as soon as next week.

Egg shortage in April?

Tiu Laurel yesterday also warned of possible shortage in the supply of eggs in April, saying many producers decided to either stop their operation or slaughter their chicken layers in 2024 amid the drop in farmgate price.

He said the DA is now doing the necessary action to avert the shortage.

"There is a looming shortage because last year, there was an oversupply of eggs. The farmgate price went down to as low as P4 per piece. Many (egg producers) suffered losses. They slaughtered their layers to have cash," Tiu Laurel said.

He added that the demand for eggs has increased.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/01/2418344/food-security-emergency-may-be-declared-february-4>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA to open 57 more Kadiwa stores in Metro Manila

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

February 1, 2025 | 12:00am



Individuals flock to a Kadiwa Market at the Department of Agriculture (DA) office in Quezon City on July 1, 2024, to purchase rice at P29 per kilo.

Michael Varcas / The Philippine STAR

MANILA, Philippines — Fifty-seven more Kadiwa ng Pangulo stores will open in Metro Manila where affordable rice varieties will be available.

In a radio interview yesterday, Agriculture Assistant Secretary for agribusiness, marketing and consumer affairs Genevieve Velicarica-Guevarra said there are at least 23 Kadiwa ng Pangulo stores that are currently operating in various areas in the National Capital Region (NCR).

“In terms of expansion of Kadiwa ng Pangulo, we are currently coordinating with many markers in the NCR. We have at least 23, but we will have an additional 57 where we will sell affordable rice,” Guevarra said.

The Kadiwa outlets sell rice at P29 per kilo to vulnerable sectors including persons with disabilities, senior citizens, beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program and single parents.

Aside from this, rice at P38 and P45 per kilo under the rice-for-all program for 25 percent and five percent broken rice, respectively, and P36 per kilo “Sulit” rice can also be bought at the Kadiwa stores.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2025/02/01/2418283/da-open-57-more-kadiwa-stores-metro-manila>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Rice emergency declaration only in areas with ‘extraordinary’ prices

By: [Dianne Sampang](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

INQUIRER.net / 04:03 PM February 01, 2025



INQUIRER FILES

MANILA, Philippines — The declaration of food security for rice will only be applicable to areas experiencing skyrocketing rice prices, a Department of Agriculture (DA) official clarified on Saturday. According to DA Spokesperson Asec. Arnel de Mesa, the emergency declaration is based on the Republic Act (RA) 12078, which amends the Rice Tariffication Law.

“Base kasi sa RA 12078 ay mag-intervene tayo doon sa mga lugar na may matataas, o nararanasan yung extraordinary presyo ng bigas so doon lang din mag-iintervene ang NFA ... Kung mababa naman yung presyo sa ganitong lugar, di naman yun tinitignan,” De Mesa said in an interview with Radyo 630.

(Based on the RA 12078, we will just intervene in areas experiencing extraordinary prices of rice, so NFA will only intervene in those areas... If the price of rice is low in a certain area, we will not intervene.)

The law gives the agriculture secretary the authority to declare food security emergencies in areas where food supply shortage or extraordinary price increase are observed.

DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. on Friday said that the government may declare the rice emergency on Tuesday as the National Price Coordinating Council released a resolution to recommend the emergency due to the “extraordinary increase” in rice prices.

Further, De Mesa said that they are still looking at the final decision of the declaration on which areas will be affected by the declaration.

“Ang pangunahing una na titignan, yung mga key cities at metropolitan areas natin,” De Mesa added.

(We will primarily inspect key cities and metropolitan areas.)

Under the rice emergency declaration, rice stocks of the National Food Authority (NFA) will be sold to government agencies and local government units at P36 per kilogram and consumers at P38 per kilogram.

Laurel previously assured the public that the NFA has 300,000 tons of stock that they will be releasing. He also said that NFA rice stocks are not aging, adding that the rice is guaranteed to be of high quality, well-maintained, and visually appealing.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2030468/rice-emergency-declaration-only-in-areas-with-extraordinary-prices>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Sugar producers back suspended import hurdles

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)
[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:12 AM February 01, 2025

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Sugar Millers Association Inc. (PSMA) and the Philippine Association of Sugar Refineries Inc. (Pasri) have expressed their support for a Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) order requiring entities to pay a fee and secure clearance for importing alternative sweeteners.

In a statement on Friday, the PSMA and Pasri said Sugar Order (SO) No. 6 issued earlier won't restrict the entry of imported sugar alternatives or significantly affect consumer prices.

“Reading through the order, it is clear that it does not impose restrictions on the importation of alternative sweeteners. It only requires an SRA clearance for release—which is not the same as an import permit,” Pasri president Renato Cabati said.

The groups said that the import fee of P60 per metric ton for other types of sugar, except for fructose—equivalent to just P0.06 per kilogram—will not have a substantial impact on production costs and food prices.

Cabati also said the SRA directive's goal might be to establish uniform regulations for both sugar and other sweeteners.

“Anyone can still import sweeteners, provided they comply with the clearance process. The fees and requirements outlined in the order are standard procedures for sugar importation,” he added.

‘Crucial tool’

PSMA president Terence Uygongco said the SRA directive will be a “crucial tool” in getting a clearer picture of the local sugar market by accurately assessing the supply and demand situation.

“As a regulatory agency, SRA must have its own accurate figures on all factors affecting the sugar market. It cannot solely rely on external sources, such as the Bureau of Customs, to determine sugar and sweetener demand,” sugar groups said. The SRA announced on Thursday the suspension of SO 6 following concerns raised by various industry groups about processing delays and the corresponding expenses for compliance. It was supposed to take effect this month. The SRA issued SO 6 following the “grave concern” raised by sugar industry players over the alleged unregulated importation of certain “sugars” and “sweeteners” into the country.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said they have received letters and are actively reaching out to set up meetings with the concerned groups, adding the Department of Agriculture will facilitate the dialogues to address their specific fears and concerns.

Azcona has repeatedly allayed their fears, saying the SRA has not received any reports of delays or disruptions to business operations since they started issuing import clearances for other types of sugar in 2017.

According to the Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI), the SRA order is “another form of red tape” that could hurt several local industries and their hundreds of thousands of workers nationwide.

The FPI said the order will merely result in bureaucratic inefficiencies, increase the cost of doing business—particularly for members of the Philippine Confectionery Biscuit Snack Food Association—and raise selling prices of beverage and confectionery products.

<https://business.inquirer.net/504232/sugar-producers-back-suspended-import-hurdles>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA may declare food security emergency for rice on Feb 4

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare @jordeenelagare - @inquirerdotnet](#)
Philippine Daily Inquirer / 11:37 AM January 31, 2025



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. (Photo by Jordeene B. Lagare)

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) may declare a food security emergency for rice by Tuesday next week, its top official said on Friday.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the agency received the official copy of the National Price Coordinating Council’s resolution recommending the emergency declaration.

“Well, my office just received the resolution yesterday while I was still in the US (United States), which I have to sign as part of the board. Then, probably by Tuesday, we will likely be declaring the rice emergency,” Tiu Laurel said on the sidelines of the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the DA and grocery store chain operator MerryMart Consumer Corp.



Tiu Laurel said the DA has yet to review the NPCC resolution thoroughly.

“That is very welcome dahil mababawasan yung mga laman ng mga warehouses at matutuwa na rin ang ating mga farmers na makakabili na ang NFA ng bigas mula sa kanila kasi meron ng paglalagyan,” the agriculture chief said.

(That is very welcome because it will reduce the volume of stocks stored in warehouses and farmers will also be happy because the National Food Authority will be able to buy rice from them because there is enough storage.)

“And releasing 300,000 metric tons of rice to the market within six months, I think, will soften the market and hopefully bumaba ng kaunti pa yung presyo ng bigas,” he added.

(And releasing 300,000 metric tons of rice to the market within six months, I think will soften the market and hopefully bumaba ng kaunti pa yung presyo ng bigas (rice prices will go down a little more.)

The DA has been pushing for the declaration of a food security emergency to alleviate retail prices of rice, a staple Filipino food.

Once the declaration is made, NFA buffer stocks will be sold to government agencies and local government units at P36 per kilogram and consumers at P38 per kg.

The DA is authorized by the amended Rice Tariffication Law to declare a food security emergency on rice in case of a supply shortage or extraordinary increase in rice prices.

It previously said releasing the NFA’s buffer stock would help bring down prices and at the same time decongest warehouses in preparation for the February harvest.

<https://business.inquirer.net/504138/da-may-declare-food-security-emergency-for-rice-on-feb-4>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

‘There might be a shortage of eggs by April,’ warns DA

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 08:04 AM February 01, 2025



COSTLIER SOURCE OF PROTEIN A vendor arranges trays of eggs in his store in Tondo, Manila. (Picture from GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE)

The Department of Agriculture (DA) implied there may be an egg supply shortage two months from now as many local producers suffered losses due to oversupply and lower prices last year.

“The unfortunate thing, our forecast is there might be a shortage of eggs by April,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said on Friday.

“The problem with this shortage is that last year, there was an oversupply of eggs, causing farm-gate prices to drop by P4 per piece,” he told reporters in Filipino.

“Many suffered losses. Those who incurred losses culled their laying hens to generate cash,” he said.

This particular situation “significantly reduced the population of egg-laying hens, potentially impacting future supply,” according to the secretary.

Tiu Laurel said local poultry raisers need hatching eggs as the demand for this commodity has started to increase.

“We don’t see it that way, however, anything can happen. Ang dami kasing may bird flu sa ibang bansa at huwag sanang makarating dito sa bansa natin,” Philippine Egg Board Association chairman emeritus Gregorio San Diego said in a text message.

(There are so many cases of bird flu in other countries and I hope it doesn’t reach our country.)

San Diego also said the domestic supply of eggs has increased since then.

Tiu Laurel said the potential egg supply shortfall can still be addressed even though the agency does not have existing programs to support those livestock owners who intentionally or voluntarily slaughtered their chickens to cut their losses.

“Hopefully, there may be a chance to avert this because it’s only February,” he said. “But at least, looking forward, we know there’s a problem and we will act on it.”

The agriculture chief urged financial institutions such as the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Development Bank of the Philippines to provide funding to support the industry’s repopulation efforts. Such projects can help avert a crisis similar to the situation affecting the United States, where an avian influenza outbreak has led to the culling of millions of egg-laying chickens.

“I just came back from America. There, eggs are sold from \$2.45 per tray to \$4.15 per tray. And in their supermarkets, I no longer see eggs. There’s a limit of one to two trays per individual,” Tiu Laurel said.

Hoping to alleviate the risk, the DA said it is expediting the importation of egg-laying chickens and pushing for immediate approval of avian influenza vaccines by the Food and Drug Administration.

Likewise, the agency is secure about the existence of a P300 million budget requested by the National Livestock Program to fund vaccine testing, with the possibility of mass inoculation beginning as early as March.

The monitored release of these vaccines, according to Tiu Laurel, will give confidence to the industry.

Currently, the Philippines has no positive cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza, based on the Bureau of Animal Industry’s update as of Jan. 24.

“There were no ongoing cases since culling/depopulation and surveillance activities within 1-km radius in the previously reported cases were completed,” it added.

[https://business.inquirer.net/504380/there-might-be-a-shortage-of-eggs-by-april-warns-da?utm_source=\(direct\)&utm_medium=gallery](https://business.inquirer.net/504380/there-might-be-a-shortage-of-eggs-by-april-warns-da?utm_source=(direct)&utm_medium=gallery)

BUSINESS WORLD:

Fisherfolk cooperatives, LGUs say pro-fisheries BFAR chief good for sector

January 31, 2025 | 1:39 pm



Elizer Salilig, director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)

Various fisherfolk cooperatives and local government units, which are home to big fishing communities, welcomed the appointment Elizer Salilig as director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), saying that having a career official at the helm of the agency bodes well for the fisheries sector.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. recently named Salilig, who has been a public servant engaged in fisheries management for the last 34 years, to BFAR's top post and was sworn into office by the Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel on Jan. 24, 2025.

Juliet Gutierrez, president of Samaka Sablayan, an association of more than 20 cooperatives, credited Salilig for helping them organize cooperatives for women fisherfolk in the MIMAROPA (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan) to achieve the group's goal of establishing "one women fisherfolk cooperative per municipality."

According to Geraldo Abello, chairperson of Dahilican Roxas Fishermen Cooperative, Salilig was instrumental for upskilling fishers in Oriental Mindoro to become entrepreneurs and engage in small businesses beyond fishing.

"[S]iya po ang naging instrument upang imulat kaming mga mangingisda na hindi lang pala kami dapat aasa sa nahuling isda, kundi dapat kami ay maging entrepreneur at magnegosyo," Abello said.

Bongabong Mayor Elegio Malaluan and president of the League of Mayors of Oriental Mindoro, said that Salilig's stint as regional director of BFAR-MIMAROPA strengthened cooperation and collaboration between the agency and local government units particularly in the enforcement and implementation of fisheries laws, rules and regulations in a bid to keep a peaceful environment for both the commercial and municipal fishers.

For his part, Salilig said it was the responsibility of the agency to improve the lot of fisherfolk, the sector the plays a vital role in ensuring there is food on the table of every Filipino.

Speaking for the first time to his colleagues in BFAR since his appointment to the post last week, Salilig said: "The fisheries sector is an important pillar in the food supply chain and our economy."

"Responsibilidad natin sa BFAR na suportahan ang ating mga mangingisda at itaas ang kalidad ng kanilang pamumuhay sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay ng nararapat na suporta at kalidad na serbisyo," said Salilig, whose been a public servant for the last 34 years.

According to Salilig, who started as fishery technician for the Department of Agriculture in Region XII, one of his goals is to boost the aquaculture industry and production.

"Amid the growing challenges posed by climate change, I am determined to focus on strengthening the aquaculture industry and transitioning toward sustainable fisheries practices," the new BFAR chief said upon his appointment by President Marcos. "To achieve this, we will actively collaborate with other government agencies and academic institutions to enhance research and development efforts."

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

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<https://www.bworldonline.com/spotlight/2025/01/31/650282/fisherfolk-cooperatives-lgus-say-pro-fisheries-bfar-chief-good-for-sector/>

REMATE:

Kakapusan ng itlog, pagsirit ng presyo tinutugunan na ng DA

February 1, 2025 16:36



MANILA, Philippines- Kumikilos na ang Department of Agriculture (DA) para masiguro na maiiwasan ang nagbabadyang kakapusan at magiging bunga ng pagtaas ng presyo ng itlog sa second quarter ng taon.

Ang nagbabadyang kakapusan ay bunsod ng epekto ng pagkalugi noong nakaraang taon dahil sa oversupply at pagbagsak ng presyo ng itlog.

Sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na ang pagkalugi noong nakaraang taon ang dahilan para mapwersa ang ilang local producers na katayin ang kanilang layers, nauwi sa pagkabawas sa populasyon ng egg-laying hens o mga manok na nangingitlog.

“Bumagsak ang presyo sa farm gate ng P4 na piso bawat piraso. Maraming nalugi. Iyong mga nalugi naman, kinatay nila yung mga layers nila para magkaroon ng cash,” ani Tiu Laurel.

Umaasa naman ang Kalihim na ang presyo ng itlog ay hindi tataas mula sa kasalukuyang antas nito, may presyo na mula P8 at P9 kada piraso, o may ‘minimal increase’ sa Abril.

“May chance pa naman ma-avert itong ating sinasabi ko sa Abril dahil Pebrero pa lang naman. But at least, looking forward, we know there’s a problem and we will act on it,” ayon kay Tiu Laurel.

Kabilang aniya sa ginagawang pagkilos ng DA ay ang mass rollout ng avian influenza (AI) vaccines sa ilalim ng ‘monitored release’ na tinitingnan sa buwan ng Marso hanggang Abril, Sa kabila ng walang aktibo o positibong kaso ng highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) sa Pilipinas.

Layon ng naging pagkilos ng DA na maiwasan ang kahalintulad na krisis na kasalukuyang nararanasan sa Estados Unidos sanhi ng patuloy na paglaganap ng HPAI, kabilang na ang bihirang strain ng bird flu na tinatawag na H5N9.

Aniya, may 145 milyong manok ang kinatay sa Estados Unidos dahil sa HPAI.

Si Tiu Laurel, kadarating lamang mula sa Estados Unidos ay nagpahayag na dahil sa krisis, ang isang karton ng itlog na ibinebenta ay USD4.15 (P242 o P20 kada itlog), na may ‘purchase restrictions’ na isa hanggang dalawang karton lamang sa supermarket.

Aniya, nakahanda ang DA na tumulong sa local producers hinggil sa importasyon.

“Ang pinakamalaking tulong maibibigay ng gobyerno sa DA sa industriya is to facilitate iyong pag-import ng mga bagong layers into the country, ma-fast track iyan. I will be setting (up) a meeting with them (stakeholders) very soon,” pahayag ni Tiu Laurel.

Samantala, nanawagan naman si Tiu Laurel sa financial institutions na paigtingin ang suporta sa local producers.

“The best thing is sana iyong mga financial institutionay mabigyan ng pautang iyong ating mga egg industry and let them repopulate,” ayon pa rin kay Tiu Laurel. **Kris Jose**

<https://remate.ph/kakapusan-ng-itlog-pagsirit-ng-presyo-tinutugunan-na-ng-da/>

REMATE:

P3-B cold storage facility para sa gulay, pananim itatayo ng DA

January 31, 2025 17:17



MANILA, Philippines – UPANG mabawasan ang pagkasira ng gulay at pananim sinabi ng Department of Agriculture (DA) nitong Lunes na naglaan sila ng P3 Bilyon para sa pagtatayo ng 99 cold storage facilities na makakabawas sa pagkasira at pag-aaksaya ng mga prutas, gulay at mga high-value crops. Sinabi ng DA na ang pagtatayo ng mga pasilidad ng mega-cold storage ay naka-target na magsimula sa taong ito at inaasahang tatagal ng humigit-kumulang 18 hanggang 22 buwan pagkatapos maigawad ang kontrata.

Ayon kay Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., “Sa pamamagitan ng pagpapabuti ng cold chain infrastructure, palalaksin natin ang sektor ng agrikultura, bawasan ang pagkalugi sa sakahan, pahabain ang shelf life ng mga produktong pang-agrikultura, patatagin ang supply at presyo, at masisiguro ang food security.”

Nabatid pa sa kagawaran na sa P3-bilyong budget, ang P1.5 bilyon ay mula sa hindi nakaprogramang pondo noong 2024 at ang kalahati ay bahagi ng budget ng DA para sa 2025.

“Ang mga hindi nakaprogramang pondo ay gagastusin para magtayo ng humigit-kumulang 65 maliit o modular chiller-type cold storage facility sa buong bansa at isang malaking cold storage facility na itatayo sa Camarines Sur,” ani Tiu Laurel.

Kaugnay nito ang renewable energy sources tulad ng solar at wind ay ta-tap para sa power supply ng mga refrigerated warehouses.

Samantala, ang 40-foot modular refrigerated warehouses ay magkakaroon ng kapasidad na nasa pagitan ng 7 hanggang 15 metric tons at inaasahang gagana sa loob ng tatlong buwan ng konstruksyon.

Sinabi ng DA na ang cold storage project ay bahagi ng isang komprehensibong logistics master plan na kinabibilangan din ng isang matatag na network ng kalsada, agricultural seaports, at isang integrated cold chain network upang i-streamline ang pamamahagi ng mga produktong pang-agrikultura sa bansa. (*Santi Celario*)

<https://remate.ph/p3-b-cold-storage-facility-para-sa-gulay-pananim-itatayo-ng-da/>

REMATE:

P29/kg bigas ng DA mabibili na sa piling supermarkets

January 31, 2025 16:39



MANILA, Philippines – Nakipag-ugnayan ang Department of Agriculture (DA) sa MerryMart Groceries Centers Inc. upang palawakin ang Kadiwa ng Pangulo (KNP) Rice for All (RFA) at P29 programs, na naglalayong magbigay ng murang bigas sa mga Pilipino.

Pumirma sina Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. at MerryMart President Ferdinand Sia ng kasunduan sa Pasay City noong Biyernes. Sa ilalim nito, magbebenta ang MerryMart ng RFA rice mula DA, kabilang ang RFA 5 (PHP45/kg), RFA 25 (PHP38/kg), RFA 100 (PHP36/kg), at ang P29/kg rice stock para sa mga nangangailangang sektor.

Ilulunsad din ng MerryMart ang MerryRice program, kung saan maibebenta ang well-milled rice sa halagang PHP29/kg sa loob ng dalawang buwan. Pwedeng bumili ang mga mamimili at retailers ng 50-kg sako sa halagang PHP1,450 sa pamamagitan ng MM Wholesale app, na may libreng delivery para sa PHP10,000 pataas na order.

Tatagal ang programa mula Pebrero 1 hanggang Marso 31 sa mga piling lugar kabilang ang Metro Manila, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal, Bulacan, Tarlac, Pangasinan, Nueva Ecija, Zambales, Bataan, at Pampanga. Kasabay nito, nag-aalok din ng sample rice ang DA sa iba pang supermarket gaya ng Robinsons, SM, Landmark, Puregold, at 7/11 para sa posibleng pagsali sa programa. **RNT**

<https://remate.ph/p29-kg-bigas-ng-da-mabibili-na-sa-piling-supermarkets/>

REMATE:

Corn procurement sinisilip ng NFA para tumulong sa mga magsasaka sa gitna ng mababang farmgate prices

January 31, 2025 11:45



MANILA, Philippines- Pinag-aaralan ng National Food Authority (NFA) ang posibleng pagkuha ng mais para tulungan ang mga magsasaka sa gitna ng bumababang farmgate prices.

“For 2025, according to NFA, since hindi iyan na (since it’s not) programmed for 2025, they will find ways on how procurement for corn can be included in their procurement activities for the year,” ayon kay Department of Agriculture (DA) spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa.

Ang NFA ay mayroon lamang P9 billion sa ilalim ng 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA) para sa procurement ng palay (unhusked rice) para sa national rice buffer stock.

Sinabi ni De Mesa na maaaring tingnan ng NFA na gamitin ang unprogrammed funds para bumili ng mais ngayong taon.

“For the 2026 plan and budget proposal, isasama na raw nila ang budget for procurement of corn,” aniya pa rin.

Sa isinagawang House Quinta Committee hearing, araw ng Martes, may ilang mambabatas ang nanawagan sa NFA na bumili ng 800,000 metric tons (MT) ng local corn sa presyong P17 per kilogram sa gitna ng bumababang demand sa swine sector bunsod ng epekto ng African swine fever.

“Nung bumaba iyong demand, bumagsak iyong presyo, according sa industry, ng hanggang PHP12 per kilo,” wika ng opisyal.

Sa nakalipas na taon, sinabi ni De Mesa na ang kadalasang farmgate price ng mais ay mula P18/kg hanggang P21/kg; na may production cost na mula P10/kg hanggang P12/kg.

Habang ang pag-aaral ay patuloy na isinasagawa, sinabi ni de Mesa na nakahanda ang DA na tulungan ang lokal na local corn farmers, kabilang na sa distribusyon ng mga punla, fertilizers, machinery, at availability ng credit assistance.

Gayunman, binigyang-diin ito na ang “robust local corn production” ay nananatiling mahalaga, ikonsidera na rito ang mataas na demand sa poultry subsector.

“Mas malaki kasi iyong feed requirements ng poultry at saka ng layers. Ang poultry at saka yung layers, base doon sa huling datos ng PSA (Philippine Statistics Authority), increased by 6 percent,” giit ni de Mesa.

Tinatayang may 1.4 million corn farmers sa bansa, na may pangunahing producing areas na matatagpuan sa Cagayan Valley, Northern Mindanao, at Soccsksargen. **Kris Jose**

<https://remate.ph/corn-procurement-sinisilip-ng-nfa-para-tumulong-sa-mga-magsasaka-sa-gitna-ng-mababang-farmgate-prices/>

ABANTE:

Food security emergency isasabotahe ng mga hoarder

Abante News

- February 1, 2025



Naniniwala ang Senate Committee on Ways and Means na isasabotahe ng mga hoarder ng bigas ang idedeklarang food security emergency sa Pebrero 4.

Base sa nakalap ng komite, gagawa ng paraan ang sindikatong ito upang hindi tuluyang bumaba ang presyo ng bigas sa kabila ng aksiyon ng Department of Agriculture.

Sa ilalim ng food security emergency, bibili ang gobyerno ng bigas kahit mataas ang presyo at ibebenta nang mura para mapababa ang presyo sa pamilihan.

Gayunman, nakahanda na rin umano ang sindikato para makontra ang hakbang ng Agriculture department.

Ayon sa ilang miyembro ng komite, hanggang hindi nakakasuhan ang sindikato sa bigas, patuloy na tataas ang presyo nito at kawawa ang mga consumer. Anila, dapat masampolan ang sindikato upang maputol na ang maliligayang araw nila sa pagmamanipula sa presyo ng bigas sa bansa.

Binanggit pa ng komite na may pinirmahan nang batas si Pangulong Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. tungkol sa agricultural smuggling bilang economic sabotage at maaaring magamit ang batas na ito laban sa mga nagmamanipula sa presyo ng bigas.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/02/01/food-security-emergency-isasabotahe-ng-mga-hoarder/>

ABANTE:

PH kakapusin suplay ng itlog sa bird flu

Abante News

• February 1, 2025



Nagbabala ang Department of Agriculture (DA) na posibleng kapusin sa suplay ng itlog ang bansa dahil sa mga pangamba sa bird flu.

Binanggit ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na dahil sa bird flu outbreak sa Estados Unidos, tumaas ang presyo nito nang patayin ang maraming nangingitlog na manok.

Kahit hindi pa umaabot sa Pilipinas ang bird flu outbreak, sinabi ni Laurel na maaaring makaranas ng kakulangan ng suplay pagsapit ng Abril.

“Ang problema dito sa shortage na ito is because last year naman, sobrang raming itlog na bumagsak ang presyo sa farmgate ng P4 bawat piraso. Maraming nalugi. ‘Yung mga nalugi naman, kinatay nila ‘yung mga layers nila para magkaroon ng cash,” ani Laurel.

Upang masolusyunan ang paparating na problema, minamadali ng DA ang importasyon ng mga buhay na manok at hihingi sila ng approval sa Food and Drug Administration (FDA) para sa avian influenza vaccine.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/02/01/ph-kakapusin-suplay-ng-itlog-sa-bird-flu/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

A letter of appeal to the Sugar Regulatory Administration

Dr. Jesus Lim Arranza

January 31, 2025

Last year, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) issued Sugar Order (SO) No. 06, series of 2023-2024, basically mandating importers of “other sugar” to get clearance from the SRA first before their shipments could be allowed to enter the country. The order is due for implementation in February.

The Philippine Confectionery Biscuit Snack Food Association (PCBSA) and Beverage Industry Association of the Philippines (BIAP), both members of the Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI), conveyed their concerns to me as chairman of the FPI.

We agreed to write letters to SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Ascona and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. appealing for reconsideration of the order’s implementation due to its foreseen ill effects to the local makers of confectioneries and beverages, and ultimately the consumers due to its inflationary impact.

The SRA order, we believe, also contradicts the pronouncements of President Marcos to remove bureaucratic red tape that affects the competitiveness of businesses in the country, subsequently hindering the inflow of investments here.

Below is my letter to Administrator Ascona, with high hopes that he would consider our appeal and sit down with the affected industries and other stakeholders for a dialogue:

27 January 2025

HON. PABLO LUIS AZCONA

Administrator and CEO

Sugar Regulatory Administration

North Avenue, Quezon City, M.M.

Dear Administrator & CEO Azcona:

One of our industry association-members has sought the help of the Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI), i.e., the Philippines Confectionery Biscuit & Snack Food Association (PCBSA), in requesting the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) to take a second look at the recently issued Sugar Order No. 6, and consider in the meantime the suspension of its implementation.

As announced to the tri-media by your office, the objective of the Order is to enable the SRA to gather information and data on the importation of “other sugars” and “confectionery sugar” such as but not limited to sucrose, specialty sugar, flavored syrups, fructose, lactose, glucose, dextrose, maltose, maltodextrin, maple sugar and maple syrups, sugar syrups, coconut sugar, palm sugar, coconut sap sugar, honey, caramel, and sugar confectionery. The principal reason cited is the fact the 2022 ASEAN Unified Tariff Nomenclature covers such materials as “other sugars” or “confectionery sugar.”

FPI submits, and it fully agrees with the PCBSA, that if SRA’s purpose is merely to gather information and data on importations made by manufacturers and other third person of the said “other sugars” and “confectionery sugars,” the SRA can simply ask the Bureau of Customs (BoC) for data on such importations. It is quite easy for the BoC to obtain this given the fact that data on all importations is closely monitored by the BoC and data on the importations of

“other sugars” and “confectionery sugar” can easily be filtered out and collated especially because of the data computerization at the BoC.

We note that both the SRA and BoC are agencies belonging to the Executive Department, and surely, the appropriate arrangement on data gathering and/or exchange can be worked out and agreed upon by both agencies. Moreover, only minimal costs shall be incurred by SRA, relative to the proposed data gathering on the part of the SRA as the data will be directly provided by BoC to the SRA.

Your office also points out that the said Order does not intend to regulate the entry of “other sugars” and “confectionery sugar.” But a reading of the specific provisions of the Order reveals otherwise. Fees are even required to be paid to the SRA for clearances that SRA shall issue to importers relative to the importation into the country of said “other sugars” and “confectionery sugars” as well as the shipment thereof within the country.

We note that the Beverage Industry Association of the Philippines (BIAP) has, in its position paper, pointed out the said Order appears to be violative of the of Anti-Red Tape Act (ARTA) and contrary of the objective of law in facilitating business transactions especially those involving the government. The BIAP and other sectors have likewise stressed that the Order is actually an “over-reach” on the part of the SRA, and is inconsistent with the authority given to SRA under its charter, which is simply and basically to monitor and regulate only the production or importation of raw or refined sugar.

A reading of the Order in its totality, further reveals that the objective of the Order is actually to regulate the importation and shipment within the country of “other sugars” and “confectionery sugar,” which are clearly non-sugar materials as envisioned under SRA’s charter. This is contrary to the earlier pronouncements of SRA itself.

The FPI fully concurs with this view, and it appears that the end goal of the Order is once again to protect the local sugar industry, which the SRA readily admits especially in the 6th and 7th whereas clauses of the Order.

The FPI, PCBSA, and BIAP are in agreement with the SRA that the sugar industry needs support. To be meaningful and long-lasting, this support should come in the form of technological upgrades that will allow our planters, millers, and other stakeholders of the industry to improve their planting and manufacturing methods and processes to attain efficiency, resulting in higher supply and lower prices, in the process benefiting the end-users as well.

PCBSA further points out that:

Glucose is not being utilized by manufacturers to replace sugar, but is needed on the recipe to make candies hard such as MAXX Mentholated Mint. It also prevents crystallization and it acts as a texturizer and improves the shelf-life of candies.

Maltodextrin, on the other hand, is bland in taste, has no sweetness, so it does not replace sugar. It is made from corn and not from sugar cane.

PCBSA members have been importing glucose for the last 30 years, and recent importations are not intended to shift away from the use of sugar.

It is FPI’s submission that implementing the Order will — 1) merely result in bureaucratic inefficiencies, 2) increase the cost of doing business especially on the part of PCBSA members, 3) increase the selling prices of beverage and confectionery products, and 4) ultimately adversely affect the Filipino consumer.

We thus urge the SRA to set a dialogue or meeting with the beverage, food and confectionery industry so that their position can really be heard, studied, and evaluated by the government. We reiterate our request that in the meantime, the SRA suspends the implementation of the Order.

Trusting, the SRA will be open to this suggestion on the part of the FPI.

Very truly yours,

Jesus Lim Arranza

Chairman

Dr. Jesus Lim Arranza is the chairman of the Federation of Philippine Industries and Fight Illicit Trade; a broad-based, multisectoral movement intended to protect consumers, safeguard government revenues and shield legitimate industries from the ill effects of smuggling.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/31/a-letter-of-appeal-to-the-sugar-regulatory-administration/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Fisherfolk cooperatives, LGUs say pro-fisheries BFAR chief good for sector

BusinessMirror
January 31, 2025



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Speaking for the first time to his colleagues in BFAR since his appointment to the post last week, Salilig said: “The fisheries sector is an important pillar in the food supply chain and our economy.”

“Responsibilidad natin sa BFAR na suportahan ang ating mga mangingisda at itaas ang kalidad ng kanilang pamumuhay sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay ng nararapat na suporta at kalidad na serbisyo,” said Salilig, whose been a public servant for the last 34 years.

According to Salilig, who started as fishery technician for the Department of Agriculture in Region XII, one of his goals is to boost the aquaculture industry and production.

“Amid the growing challenges posed by climate change, I am determined to focus on strengthening the aquaculture industry and transitioning toward sustainable fisheries practices,” the new BFAR chief said upon his appointment by President Marcos. “To achieve this, we will actively collaborate with other government agencies and academic institutions to enhance research and development efforts.”

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

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