

## CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY FEBRUARY 10, 2025

### A. THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

NFA to sell P33/kilo rice to LGUs this week

Food security gets boost from P20 billion animal competitiveness fund

Price limit on imported rice dents Vietnam export prices

Farmers decry onion importation

Punish them!

EDITORIAL - Rice emergency

### B. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Bureau of Customs' transformation

### C. BUSINESS WORLD:

PHL working to address US fears about coconut oil health impact

Working group formed to draft rules on ruminant diseases

US farmers turn to Airbnb to outlast agricultural downturn

### D. MANILA STANDARD:

Higher US tariffs to have little impact on PH—PhilExport

### E. THE MANILA TIMES:

Tiu Laurel: Prioritize projects with good returns

Declining fisheries production in Cebu

### F. BUSINESS MIRROR:

Amid inflation woes, BSP easing seen mild

PHL sardine industry gets boost as tamban joins Codex global standards

New BFAR chief told to protect small fishers

Imported rice arrivals fall by half in Jan—BPI

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# **NFA to sell P33/kilo rice to LGUs this week**

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

February 10, 2025 | 12:00am



This photo shows two workers passing a sack of NFA rice.

The STAR / Michael Varcas  
ADVERTISEMENT

**MANILA, Philippines** — The National Food Authority is expected to start releasing at least 700,000 bags of NFA rice to local government units (LGUs) this week as part of the implementation of the food security emergency.

In a radio interview yesterday, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said the NFA will sell the rice stocks at P33 per kilo while the LGUs can resell the staple at P35 per kilo.

“There is still of course a need to address bureaucratic process between the NFA, Food Terminal Inc. and the LGUs so hopefully, this week all of these will be finalized and we can release the first stock of NFA, totaling 700,000 bags,” De Mesa said.

On Feb. 4, the country was placed under a food security emergency as measures set in place by the government to pull down rice prices have failed.

Citing an “extraordinary increase in rice prices,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. issued Department Circular No. 3 formally declaring a food security emergency, based on a resolution of the 10-member National Price Coordinating Council.

With the declaration of a food security emergency, the NFA can start selling its rice stocks.

“The priority areas include Metro Manila. Outside the National Capital Region, the priority areas are those with high retail price (of rice) based on the study of the Philippine Statistics Authority. The highest was in region 7, particularly Cebu,” De Mesa added.

De Mesa added that the release of NFA rice is necessary so that the warehouses will be freed of stocks in time for the harvest of local farmers.

“The capacity of the warehouses of NFA is very limited. That’s the intention (of the food security emergency),” he added.

He noted that the harvest for the dry season has already started and will peak in March until April.

According to De Mesa, Tiu Laurel will immediately lift the food security emergency once the objective to bring down the retail prices of rice is achieved.

Aside from the food security emergency, the DA has imposed maximum suggested retail price (SRP) on imported rice after Executive Order 62, which lowered the tariff on imported rice to 15 percent, failed to bring down prices.

Based on monitoring of the DA in Metro Manila markets, the retail price of imported special rice is still sold for as high as P60 per kilo despite the P55 max SRP.

Imported premium rice was sold as high as P58 per kilo; imported well-milled rice, P45 per kilo and imported regular rice, P46 per kilo.

De Mesa said that no notice of violation will be issued to retailers despite non-compliance to the max SRP to allow them to sell their old stocks.

### **Healthier food options**

The Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) said that healthier food options may soon be available as PhilRice technologists have developed pigmented rice bran-infused yogurt.

PhilRice food technologist Henry Corpuz said the improved yogurt incorporates stabilized rice bran—the outer layer of red and black rice known for its high dietary fiber, vitamins, mineral content and phytochemicals.

Corpuz added that these nutrients may offer various health benefits, including antioxidant activity and anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer, anti-obesity, and antidiabetic properties, making the yogurt an even healthier alternative to conventional dairy-based probiotics.

“We’re making it even better by using buffalo milk in partnership with the Philippine Carabao Center at Central Luzon State University and enriching it with pigmented rice bran,” Corpuz said.

PhilRice has also developed a variety of functional food products made from brown rice, low glycemic index rice and germinated brown rice.

“These food innovations align with the government’s efforts to address the triple burden of malnutrition: undernutrition or wasting and stunting, micronutrient deficiency or lack of essential vitamins and minerals, and overnutrition or excessive food intake leading to obesity,” Corpuz said.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/10/2420460/nfa-sell-p33kilo-rice-1gus-week>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Food security gets boost from P20 billion animal competitiveness fund

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

February 10, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The creation of an earmarked fund for the development of livestock and poultry sectors using collected tariffs is critical in boosting domestic meat production and achieving food security amid threats of animal diseases, experts said.

Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. president Danilo Fausto said the impending enactment of the Animal Industry Development and Competitiveness Act would be a “great” boost to the livestock sector, especially its programs to mitigate biosecurity threats.

The House of Representatives recently approved on third reading House Bill 11355 that aims to rationalize and strengthen the Bureau of Animal Industry while creating the Animal Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (ANCEF).

The ANCEF is a 10-year earmarked fund with an annual appropriation of P20 billion, primarily financed by tariffs collected from imported meat and dairy products, to bankroll programs aimed to develop the domestic livestock, dairy and poultry sectors.

The fund was patterned after the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund, which lawmakers have touted as a role model in developing agricultural sectors.

The bill is now set to be deliberated by the bicameral conference committee to address the disagreeing provisions in the versions of the houses of Congress.

“ANCEF has the potential to improve food security and boost the resilience of the livestock, dairy and poultry sectors, with effective governance playing a crucial role in achieving these outcomes,” University of Asia and the Pacific Center for Food and Agri Business executive director Marie Annette Dacul told The STAR.

She pointed out that the success of ANCEF would depend on “solid” governance to ensure transparency and proper management of funds.

“Focusing investments on research, infrastructure and modernization will be crucial in driving sustainable growth and strengthening the sectors over time,” she said.

The ANCEF was earlier estimated to have a guaranteed budget of P7 billion from tariff collections but it was revised upward to P15 billion after the Department of Agriculture (DA) validated the figures. But now, lawmakers and DA officials are looking at P20 billion.

The programs that would be financed by ANCEF include herd build-up and repopulation, research and development, animal health and welfare, capacity recovery, post-harvest facilities, food safety and extension support, feeds distribution, credit, marketing and clustering of farmers, among others.

“The revenues in excess of P20 billion shall be allocated for direct finance support programs for farmers including recovery programs and support,” House committee on agriculture and food chairman Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga said.

He noted that the government collected P26 billion in tariffs from imported meat and dairy products in 2023 and another P25 billion last year.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/02/10/2420385/food-security-gets-boost-p20-billion-animal-competitiveness-fund>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Price limit on imported rice dents Vietnam export prices

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

February 10, 2025 | 12:00am



The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that its all-rice price index in January dropped by 4.7 percent to 113.6 points on a monthly basis and declined by 20.4 percent on an annual basis.

[Philstar.com](#) / Jovannie Lambayan

**MANILA, Philippines** — Vietnam rice prices declined steeply last month as harvest in the world's second-largest exporter is set to begin coupled by the imposition of a price ceiling on imported rice by the Philippines.

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that its all-rice price index in January dropped by 4.7 percent to 113.6 points on a monthly basis and declined by 20.4 percent on an annual basis.

The FAO noted that the Indica price index registered the "sharpest" decline last month as it slid by 5.4 percent from December to a 25-month-low of 120.3 points.

One of the reasons behind the drop in the Indica price index was the lower rice prices in Vietnam, where trade sentiment was weighed by its upcoming harvest and recent market developments in the Philippines, according to the FAO.

In particular, the FAO pointed out that the implementation of a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) by the Philippines, which is Vietnam's prime destination for rice, coupled by the declaration of a food security emergency on rice impacted Vietnam rice prices.

"These factors translated into a 14 percent monthly slide in Vietnamese quotations to their lowest since September 2022," the FAO said.

"In the case of five percent broken rice, the slump positioned Vietnamese prices at a \$9 to \$62 discount to those of competing Asian origins," the FAO added.

Based on its monitoring, the FAO said the average price of five percent broken Vietnamese rice last month stood at \$416 per metric ton (MT), more than a third lower than the \$634.5 per MT recorded in the same month of 2024.

Meanwhile, the 25 percent broken Vietnamese price has plunged by 35 percent year-on-year to \$388.8 per MT from \$599.3 per MT, according to the FAO.

Vietnam accounts for at least 75 percent of the country's annual rice imports. About 3.6 million MT of the country's total rice import volume of 4.81 million MT last year came from Vietnam.

The Bureau of Customs has also seen a sharp drop in its reference values for imported rice with five percent broken Vietnamese rice pegged at \$399 per MT while its 25 percent counterpart estimated at \$371 per MT.

The drop in Vietnamese rice prices have forced local traders and importers to hold off or cancel some of their contracts to take advantage of the more affordable prices, Reuters reported over the weekend. Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. confirmed to The STAR that indeed there are rice contracts with Vietnamese exporters that were canceled by local importers and traders because of the drastic drop in prices.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) imposed an MSRP on premium imported rice stocks, or those with five percent broken, as part of its measures to pull down prices of the staple in the market and curb possible profiteering by wholesalers and retailers.

The MSRP started at a P58 per kilo ceiling and was revised downward to P55 per kilo last week. The MSRP is set to be implemented nationwide beginning Feb. 15.

Tiu Laurel earlier said he expects a further reduction of the MSRP in the coming weeks, possibly below P50 per kilo by early March.

“After this reduction, we plan to lower it further to P52 a kilo by mid-February and then at P49 per kilo two weeks after. This should reflect the lower global prices of rice and the reduced tariff,” Tiu Laurel said.

Imported premium rice is currently selling from P50 to P58 per kilo in Metro Manila markets with an average price of P53.83 per kilo, based on DA price monitoring report.

Imported well-milled rice, meanwhile, ranges from P44 to P55 per kilo while its regular-milled counterpart costs P38 to P46 per kilo.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/02/10/2420387/price-limit-imported-rice-dents-vietnam-export-prices>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Farmers decry onion importation

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

February 10, 2025 | 12:00am



Victor Danipog, an onion farmer from Nueva Ecija, said farmers have yet to recover from losses incurred during the storms in November and the recent worm attack.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Onion farmers have criticized the decision of the Department of Agriculture (DA) to import the bulb, describing it as a “double whammy” as plantations in Nueva Ecija, the country’s onion capital, are being attacked by armyworms.

Victor Danipog, an onion farmer from Nueva Ecija, said farmers have yet to recover from losses incurred during the storms in November and the recent worm attack.

“Now here come the imported onions. Our farmers are already feeling the impact of the announcement of the DA that it will import onions,” Danipog said over dzBB.

He noted that farmers were forced to plant onions anew after the devastation of their farms in November last year, and had to spend more on pesticides after armyworms attacked their plantations – a process that forced them to spend P300,000 to P400,000 per hectare.

Farmers’ group Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) yesterday said the decision to import at least 4,000 metric tons (MT) of onions in the middle of harvest season will drive down farmers’ incomes while benefiting a few importers.

KMP chairperson Danilo Ramos said the government’s continued dependence on importation as a band-aid solution has consistently failed to stabilize prices.

“The 2022 onion crisis, when retail prices of onion skyrocketed to P700 per kilo, was not a result of production failure but of cartel manipulation and government inefficiencies. Instead of addressing the root causes like hoarding, price manipulation and lack of farmer support, the DA continues to rely on importation, further crippling local producers,” Ramos said.

According to the DA, the importation of 3,000 MT of red onions and 1,000 MT of white onions is necessary to prevent a spike in retail price of the bulbs, which has reportedly reached P200 per kilo.

But Ramos said the government’s onion importation “right in the middle of harvest season is a deliberate act of economic sabotage that will only drive down farmers’ incomes.”

“Instead of importation, the government should focus on strengthening local production by providing post-harvest facilities, cold storage and direct market access for farmers. The DA should stop these imports so that Filipino farmers can get fair prices for their hard-earned produce,” Ramos added.

According to Danipog, traders have stopped buying onions from local farmers in anticipation of the arrival of imported bulbs.

“At present the farmgate price (of onions) is at P70 (per kilo). We will earn if that farmgate price is maintained. But, buyers already stopped buying because of the impending importation. Nobody buys (onions in the farms),” Danipog said.

“If the farmgate price of onions reaches P25 (per kilo), we cannot even recover our expenses,” Danipog said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the importation is necessary amid the projected deficit in onion supply this month and the increase in the retail price of the bulbs.

Tiu Laurel said the imported bulbs should arrive on Feb. 20.

Former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor criticized the importation decision, calling it ill-timed amid the ongoing harvests in major onion-producing areas like Bayambang in Pangasinan, San Jose in Occidental Mindoro and Bongabon and Laur in Nueva Ecija.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2025/02/10/2420403/farmers-decry-onion-importation>



**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

## **Punish them!**



[CTALK - Cito Beltran](#) - The Philippine Star

February 10, 2025 | 12:00am

Three in one day, that was the number of judges and court cases that became the focus of The Philippine STAR editorial on Feb. 3 that harped on how judges “gravely abused discretion” and ignored strong evidence.”

The first case mentioned in the editorial was about bail being allowed for six suspects in the “Missing Sabungeros” case in spite of a video showing them forcing the “victims” into a van. The sabungeros have never been seen since then and the chances of rearresting the six suspects are slim to none.

The second/third case in The STAR editorial involves Judge Irin Zenaida Buan of the Angeles City RTC Branch 56 who allowed former police colonel Rafael Dumlao III to post bail for the October 2016 gangland style execution of South Korean businessman Jee Ick-Joo in his car inside Camp Crame.

In 2023, Angeles RTC Branch 60 Judge Eda Dizon acquitted Dumlao.

In July 2024, the Court of Appeals (CA) reversed Dizon’s ruling and declared Dumlao as the mastermind of the kidnapping and killing of Jee Ick-Joo.

The Supreme Court commented that the CA found the RTC proceedings to be “a sham and an apparent mockery of the judicial process, making Dumlao’s acquittal a foregone conclusion and in total disregard of the evidence.”

Now, there is another controversial case that started at the Malabon Regional Trial Court and now involves the First Division of the Supreme Court decision declaring the Fisheries Code of the Philippines preferential access provisions as “unconstitutional.”

The code or law provides protection for small-scale fisherfolk by prohibiting commercial fishing vessels from entering “municipal waters,” which is a distance of 15 kilometers from the shoreline. The distance is stated in the Philippine Fisheries Code as well as the Local Government Code (RA No. 7160).

But unlike the missing sabungeros case and the case against Col. Rafael Dumlao, the RTC and SC First Division decision on constitutionality of the Fisheries Code runs against established laws supported by government policies and agencies.

It is hard to imagine that the combined knowledge and authority of government and both houses of Congress would be ignorant or blind to the constitutionality or unconstitutionality of a law as well as multiple related programs of government.

For the longest time, the government as well as the fishing sector have honored and respected the 15-kilometer no commercial fishing zone, not only to protect the livelihood of subsistence fisherfolk but recognizing the fact that it creates a sanctuary where fish and marine life are able to reproduce in a sustainable environment.

Are we to assume that the Fisheries Code of the Philippines and the Local Government Code must now be rewritten or trashed, given the decision of the Malabon RTC and the SC First Division? Who then is ignorant of the law? Lawmakers, or judges and justices?

As a result of the Malabon RTC and SC First Division decision, both the public and private sector are up in arms. In the beginning, the first to cry foul were municipal mayors and fisherfolk organizations. Then, environmentalists and marine-focused activists such as Oceana are now speaking out against the decision. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has come out with their statement of support for fisherfolk and sent out a pastoral letter to be read in masses and churches under the signatory bishops. That has not happened in a long time, so the CBCP is surely concerned.

Former Agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor and his Federation of Free Framers have spoken out against the decision, while current Secretary of Agriculture Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. expressed concern and warned of the potential adverse effects on the livelihood of small fishers and its impact on the marine ecosystem.

In response to the decision, the Department of Agriculture has filed a motion for reconsideration through the Office of the Solicitor General. Given this widespread multisectoral reaction, it would be safe to say that the SC would be wise to call for an emergency session to contain the potential crisis.

Being so close to the campaign and election period, it is likely that more fuel will go into the fire, so to speak, and the last thing the "Gods of Padre Faura" would want is to be dragged into a whirlwind of public suspicion and condemnation. Clarify and correct the matter or get a taste of the same medicine the RTC judges should be given.

Speaking of which, what punishment has the Supreme Court dished out for the three Judges who "abused their discretion and ignored evidence?" Will they get the same punishment provided for the crimes they are hearing in their courts? If not, maybe it's about time they do.

And what about the decision declaring the preferential access provision of the Fisheries Code as "unconstitutional?" Isn't that too serious a matter for an RTC judge or the First Division to decide? Shouldn't the entire Supreme Court en banc decide on questions of "constitutionality" as a whole or even form and substance of legislations?

To the credit of the Supreme Court, it has been vigilant in terms of disciplining lawyers guilty of misconduct, immorality and criminal acts. Judges have not been spared either, but given the gravity of the cases mentioned above, perhaps it is time for a "serious huddle" at the SC to refresh monitoring and regulation, internally and in the lower courts.

In a country where the word "secret" does not apply, it would be a good idea to thoroughly wash all the dirty linen.

\* \* \*

"Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God." – Deuteronomy 1:17

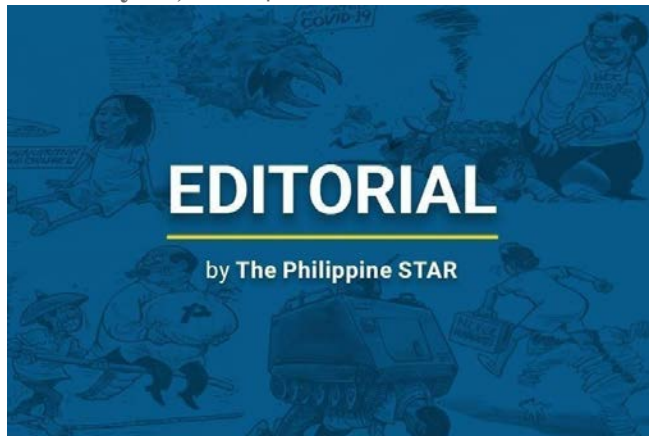
<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2025/02/10/2420415/punish-them>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# **EDITORIAL - Rice emergency**

**The Philippine Star**

**February 10, 2025 | 12:00am**



Global rice prices are down and tariffs on rice imports were cut from 35 to 15 percent beginning in July last year through Executive Order 62. The objective was to bring rice retail prices down to P42 to P46.

Yet seven months since the tariff cuts came into force, rice retail prices have stubbornly resisted being pulled down. Department of Agriculture officials said the impact of the tariff cuts would be felt beginning in January this year, after rice traders have unloaded stocks they bought under the original 35 percent tariff. This week the National Food Authority will begin selling rice at P33 a kilo to local government units and government corporations. The LGUs can then sell the rice to the public at P35 per kilo. The sale of aging NFA rice has been allowed with the declaration of a national food security emergency.

The NFA has said that at P33 a kilo, the government loses from P12 to P15 per kilo. If the NFA unloads 150,000 metric tons or 150 million kilos of its buffer stock over the next six months as planned, that's a total loss of about P2.25 billion.

Because the NFA rice is heavily subsidized, consumers will actually be bearing part of the burden of the artificial price reduction. That subsidy for low-priced rice comes from government revenues, including those automatically paid in value-added and excise taxes on basic commodities such as fuel and water by even the most impoverished person in this country.

Aside from trying to bring down the retail prices of rice, officials said the sale of the subsidized rice is also meant to free up space in NFA warehouses for the upcoming domestic rice harvest.

What people are waiting for is the delivery of the promise to reduce the number of middlemen in the rice supply chain, and to come down hard on hoarders and traders engaged in cartel-type operations. The lack of action in these areas is reinforcing suspicions that the people involved are untouchable politicians and other influential persons or groups.

At the same time, the government will have to show greater effort in boosting domestic rice production, which is the best way to stabilize the supply and prices of the nation's staple for the long term.

***How Do You Feel About This Article?***

**<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2025/02/10/2420420/editorial-rice-emergency>**

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Bureau of Customs' transformation

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 04:35 AM February 10, 2025



President Marcos was all praises for the Bureau of Customs (BOC) when he graced the agency's 123rd anniversary celebration last week. It may come as a big surprise to many, considering the BOC's tarnished image in the past as a hotbed of corruption. Sadly, this negative perception remains in the minds of many despite the significant gains achieved by the BOC in the past few years.

For instance, the President lauded the agency for collecting P931.05 billion in 2024. Although short of the P939.7-billion goal for the year, it was the highest in the agency's history and was P40 billion more than the P890.45 billion collected in 2023. To give context as to how valuable this amount is, Mr. Marcos said in his speech at the BOC event: "The 2024 collections can fund more than 7,500 train cars, more than 18,600,000 laptops, around 62,000,000 tablets for our schoolchildren, or roughly 7,750,000 scholarships for our university students."

The Chief Executive also complimented the agency's work in safeguarding the country's borders against smugglers, citing the BOC's seizure of more than P85 billion in smuggled goods in 2024, or nearly double the P43 billion in the previous year.

He also pointed to the BOC's involvement against agricultural smuggling to protect farmers from illegal products that swamp the market, noting the seizure of 21 containers of frozen mackerel worth more than P178 million, which were turned over to the Department of Agriculture and later distributed to 150,000 families in various communities and care facilities.

## **Modernization project**

The Chief Executive likewise noted that the BOC removed the accreditation of 56 importers and customs brokers as part of its campaign against illegal and questionable activities of importers and customs brokers, adding that 45 criminal complaints were filed against offenders, of which 18 were convicted and three BOC employees dismissed due to misconduct or inefficiency. In a statement last month, the bureau said 120 of its employees were investigated for alleged corruption from 2023 to 2024.

Much of the BOC's success is due to the computerization of its operations, a project that unscrupulous individuals from within and outside the agency had opposed for decades. Central to this is the World Bank-initiated \$104.38-million Philippine Customs Modernization Project (PCMP) launched in 2021, of which \$88.28 million will be funded through the multilateral agency's official development assistance and the balance by the government. After much delay, the contract for the consulting firms that will assist in all aspects of the execution and implementation of the PCMP was finally awarded in November 2023 to the joint venture of Emerging Markets International S.A. of Belgium and Spain's Instituto de la Calidad S.A. (Quality Institute).

#### **Ambitious goal**

The award sparked the implementation of the PCMP, which seeks to introduce a single and unified system that combines all the key elements and customs procedures through a streamlined and automated world-class customs processing system. Its immediate fruits did not escape the President, who noted in his speech: "Since the beginning of this administration, the BOC has relentlessly pursued its commitment to enhancing trade facilitation. As of December last year, we achieved a 96.99-percent digitalization rate." This is very important in that by digitalizing 161 out of 166 customs processes, the BOC was able to close the gaps that provided an avenue of corruption.

This computerization process needs to be pursued in earnest this year considering that the BOC is tasked with an ambitious goal of generating P1.06 trillion in 2025. The agency is setting its sights on what Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio refers to as a "transformative 2025," anchored on its 5-Point Priority Program aimed at driving efficiency, boosting revenues, and safeguarding trade.

#### **Porous borders**

Central to the program is the digitalization of customs processes and Rubio vowed that the BOC will fully automate its systems this year to enhance operational efficiency and transparency while minimizing corruption risks.

In his annual dialogue with BOC personnel last Jan. 6, Rubio said the BOC will continue to streamline processes to align these with international best practices and make it easier for businesses to comply with customs regulations. Curbing smuggling remains a critical priority for the bureau, he added. Recognizing the workforce as the organization's backbone, Rubio noted that the bureau will ensure better conditions—and possibly incentives—for its personnel.

It's still a long way to totally eradicate corruption in the trade of goods, which will need the involvement of many other agencies given the persistent smuggling problem due to the country's porous borders as an archipelago. But given its accomplishments in the past few years, the BOC may be finally shedding its dreary image as a hub of

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/180696/bureau-of-customs-transformation>

## BUSINESS WORLD:

# PHL working to address US fears about coconut oil health impact

February 10, 2025 | 12:03 am



By **Justine Irish D. Tabile**, *Reporter*

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said it may propose a joint study with the US to follow up on lingering fears about coconut products even after the withdrawal of US health warnings against coconut oil as a saturated fat.

Export Marketing Bureau Executive Director Bianca Pearl R. Sykimte said issues continue to cast doubts about coconut despite the US Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) removal of coconut from the list of tree nuts classified as major food allergens.

"For the US (we had) the health warnings against coconut oil as saturated fat, and for the European Union (EU) , we have the forthcoming EU regulation on mineral oil saturated hydrocarbons and mineral oil aromatic hydrocarbons limits on Food," she said via Viber.

She said the US and the Philippines vary in their approaches to gauging the health effects of coconut oil.

"It seems that American and Philippine doctors are looking at different parameters to gauge the health effects of consuming coconut oil," she said.

To address this, she said the Philippines proposed a joint study on the health effects of consuming coconut oil.

The US is the largest export destination for Philippine coconut food-based products. It accounted for \$556.29 million, or 25.68% of all exports, in the first 11 months of 2024, the Export Marketing Bureau reported.

The first 11 months' coconut product exports were up 65% from a year earlier.

According to Ms. Sykimte, the DTI is expecting coconut exports to the US to grow further.

The removal of the FDA designation "will give both consumers and producers more confidence in using or consuming coconut or coconut-based products, especially for consumers who have nut allergies," she said.

"We had an experience where we were promoting coconut in the US. There were a lot of inquiries, especially from producers of gluten-free and allergen-free products, but they didn't follow through when they learned that the US FDA considers coconut a tree nut. (A joint study) will really have a commercial impact," she added.

United Coconut Associations of the Philippines (UCAP) Executive Director Yvonne T.V. Agustin said that the US removal of the allergen tag on coconut is a positive development for the industry.

"This will positively impact our coconut food product exports. To consumers, manufacturers, and end users of coconut, this will ensure that including coconut as an ingredient in food formulations is safe and will not cause an allergy," she said in a Viber message.

Charles R. Avila, president of the Confederation of Coconut Farmers' Organizations of the Philippines, said that the declaration's immediate impact on individual consumers should not be underestimated.

“So many of them have habitually assumed that avoiding coconut is another way of avoiding carcinogenic food products. This news, then, is welcome to coconut producers. It’s certainly a case of ‘better late than never,’” he said via Viber.

In the late 1980s, he said that coconut was under attack due to lobbying from vegetable oil producers.

“The truth ultimately triumphed in the US Senate, which rejected the proposed labeling law that would have universally carried the insidious caveat that coconut is bad for the heart,” he said.

“But massive propaganda against coconut, which was the exact opposite of the truth, prevailed in the minds of so many consumers,” he added.

To address this, he said that the coconut industry must find ways to advertise coconut again and to erode the carcinogenic perception of coconut.

“Otherwise, it would be tragic for consumers who otherwise could be helped in their health concerns by medicinal and healthful coconut products, and for the millions of coconut farmers and traders who otherwise would be able to sell more in the global market,” he added.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/02/10/652093/phl-working-to-address-us-fears-about-coconut-oil-health-impact/>



**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Working group formed to draft rules on ruminant diseases

February 10, 2025 | 12:02 am



DAR.GOV.PH

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is looking to create guidelines to prevent outbreaks of Q fever and other ruminant diseases.

In a Special Order, the DA created a technical working group (TWG) to draft guidelines, policy, and recommendations on the prevention of Q fever outbreaks.

Last year, the Philippines logged its first case of Q fever in imported goats from the US. The infected goats were in a government breeding station in Marinduque and a quarantine facility in Pampanga.

Q fever is caused by the *Coxiella burnetii* bacteria and is transmissible to humans. Infected people have flu-like symptoms, such as body aches and headaches.

The working group is also tasked with providing technical expertise in the surveillance and monitoring of ruminant diseases.

It is to conduct regular reviews on the management of Q fever and other diseases aligned with international guidelines.

The TWG will consist of the assistant secretary for Ruminant Livestock and representatives from the Bureau of Animal Industry, the National Dairy Authority, and the Philippine Carabao Center. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/02/10/652092/working-group-formed-to-draft-rules-on-ruminant-diseases/>

## BUSINESS WORLD:

# US farmers turn to Airbnb to outlast agricultural downturn

February 10, 2025 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

BLANCHARDVILLE, Wisconsin — A dead end dirt road cutting through rural Wisconsin leads to a pasture dotted with shaggy-coated Highland cattle, fluffy Icelandic sheep and a vintage Airstream trailer that farmer Brit Thompson turned into an Airbnb to capitalize on an explosion of urbanites looking to spend time in the countryside.

Her guests, mostly Chicago-area professionals, offer a steady flow of income in an increasingly unstable agricultural economy.

Ms. Thompson, who also raises animals for meat at her farm, Pink River Ranch, is one of many farmers turning to the \$4.5-billion agricultural tourism industry, according to US Department of Agriculture (USDA) data, and offering activities and overnight stays as consumer demand for rural experiences grows and farm income declines.

Farmers whose crops are used to make food, feed livestock and produce vegetable oils are struggling to turn a profit after corn and soy prices sank to four-year lows in 2024.

Revenue from Ms. Thompson's Airbnb has helped her endure volatile commodities markets and far outpaced what she made from selling beef and lamb to restaurants and directly to consumers, she said. Free-roaming tabby cats on her property are now accustomed to the sound of guests' tires crunching on the gravel driveway and come running toward those bringing in the extra income — and the extra affection.

The guests arrive nearly every weekend during her peak season, drawn by the area's spring-fed and trout-rich streams, forested hiking trails and unpolluted night skies. Ms. Thompson's bookings soared as nearby cities shut down during the pandemic.

Agritourism boomed during COVID as people chose to vacation on farms and in rural areas, drawn by the promise of socially distanced fun in the countryside. The industry has continued to grow since, driven by increasing numbers of city dwellers seeking peace and solitude and farmers seeking additional ways to infuse their farms with much-needed cash.

"Now that we're back to normal, people are still remembering those experiences and they've brought those activities into their family traditions," said Suzi Spahr, director of the International Agritourism Association.

Nationally, about 7% of farms offer agritourism opportunities, which also includes sales of farm products to visitors, said Lisa Chase, an extension professor at the University of Vermont.

Many increased their revenue by \$25,000 to \$100,000 per year through agritourism enterprises, and some farms can make upwards of \$1 million a year from running bed-and-breakfasts, pick-your-own apple orchards and other farm experiences, she said.

The number of farmstays, an accommodation at a farm, listed on short-term rental platforms in the US increased by 77% over the past five years, roughly twice the increase in overall listings, data firm AirDNA said. Airbnb,

as well as popular campsite booking websites HipCamp, Harvest Hosts and The Dyrt, also said their platforms have seen substantial increases in farmstay listings over the past few years.

Agritourism dollars are a welcome boon in the face of low crop prices, high interest rates, and steep costs for seeds, fertilizer and labor, farmers and industry experts said. Farm income has dropped 23% from 2022 in one of the biggest declines in history, according to the USDA, and the American Farm Bureau says the agricultural economy is in a recession.

While US farm income is expected to improve this year, the upturn is largely due to federal government aid. Income from selling crops has continued to decline.

This year could bring further financial pain for farmers if trade wars with Canada, Mexico and China are prolonged. President Donald Trump announced tariffs on goods from the three countries on Feb. 1, but later offered a 30-day reprieve to Canada and Mexico after those countries offered some concessions.

“We’re able to weather some of these tighter or negative margin years because we’ve diversified the way we earn money,” said Kaylee Heap, 35, co-manager of Heap’s Giant Pumpkin Farm, a sprawling corn and soybean farm in Illinois.

“It’s the reason we diversified. If we just focused on row crops, we’d be having a different conversation.”

In the fall, Heap’s customers can pick sunflowers, mums and pumpkins; bump along on hayrides; and wander through a corn maze. The farm also produces commodity corn and soy, often for international export.

Not all farms are suited for tourism. Some have inaccessible locations or owners who are unwilling to open their property to strangers. Insurance and compliance with government regulations can also be costly.

But income from recreation and tourism can help families maintain ownership of their farms, pay off debt and provide jobs to younger generations, who sometimes prefer curating Airbnbs and building websites over monitoring soil moisture and grain futures prices, farmers said.

“You cannot survive as a family farm only farming,” said Catherine Topel, 56, a North Carolina hog producer who hosts an Airbnb cabin and campsites through HipCamp.

“The cabins, the camping — it makes you sustainable and resilient in hard times, and it gives you flexibility to enter into other enterprises instead of toeing the line of what your dad did and what your dad’s dad did.”

The desire to raise children in a rural setting and share their agricultural lifestyle with visitors also motivates farmers to open their property to the public, farmers said.

Ms. Thompson, 33, says she enjoys teaching guests about sustainable grazing, as well as fishing from her riverbank with her five-year-old daughter, who reels in fat catfish with a miniature hot-pink fishing rod.

“The younger generation finds the farm doesn’t have to be this long litany of depression and bad prices,” said Ryan Pesch, an extension educator at the University of Minnesota.

“They say: ‘Why don’t we do this other thing?’ They see opportunities and entrepreneurship,” he said.

— Reuters

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/02/10/652023/us-farmers-turn-to-airbnb-to-outlast-agricultural-downturn/>

**MANILA STANDARD:**

# Higher US tariffs to have little impact on PH—PhilExport

By Manila Standard Business

February 9, 2025, 7:20 pm

The Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. (PhilExport) expressed confidence that Philippine exports to the US would remain strong despite the trade tensions between the US and China.

PhilExport president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. also called for a de-escalation of geopolitical tensions between the Philippines and China.

“We hope [President Donald] Trump can lower geopolitics in the Philippines so we can recover the market we lost with our neighbors and China. Not only market but tourism and investment were also affected by geopolitics,” said PhilExport president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr., as he stressed the need for reducing tensions to help recover lost markets.

Ortiz-Luis said while the US recently imposed a 10-percent tariff on Chinese imports, this would have little impact on the Philippines.

“I don’t see the 10-percent tariff imposed on China affecting the Philippines because Chinese prices are so low. Even adding the 10 percent will not stop the US from buying from China,” he said.

He expressed confidence that Philippine exports to the US, the country’s largest export market, would remain strong despite the trade tensions between the two global economic powers.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority show that the US was the largest export market of the Philippines in December 2024, accounting for \$94 million, or 16.8 percent, of the country’s total export value that month.

Other major export markets for the Philippines are Japan, China, Hong Kong and Singapore.

The trade war escalated when Trump imposed broad tariffs on China, effective Feb. 4, 2025.

Trump also threatened to impose tariffs on other major trading partners, including Canada and Mexico, but recently agreed to delay the imposition of a 25-percent tariff on those countries for 30 days.

China, in response to the US tariffs, announced retaliatory measures, including a 15-percent tariff on coal and liquefied natural gas, a 10-percent tariff on crude oil and tariffs on agricultural machinery.

“It doesn’t look like he’s [Trump] really serious because they know it would be harder if China engages in a trade war with the US,” Ortiz-Luis said, pointing out the complexity of a full-scale trade war between the two largest economies in the world.

Economists warned that the ongoing trade dispute, if not defused, could lead to higher prices for a wide range of goods, including cars, steel, food, and alcohol, potentially affecting consumers worldwide.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314555723/higher-us-tariffs-to-have-little-impact-on-ph-philexport.html>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# **Tiu Laurel: Prioritize projects with good returns**

**By Giselle P. Jordan**

**February 10, 2025**

AGRICULTURE Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. called on officers in his department to wisely allocate resources and prioritize projects with strong, sustainable returns.

He specifically instructed DA officials to focus on projects with a 12-14 percent internal rate of return, or a payback period of seven years at most, to ensure bankability and profitability.

Prior to being appointed DA chief in November 2023, Tiu Laurel had engaged in several businesses including fishing, food processing, cold chain and logistics, real estate, and power.

He emphasized the need for fiscal discipline in the DA, saying every peso spent should have returns supportive of project sustainability and agricultural development.

"We don't have infinite resources, and we can't afford to waste them," he said.

He said agricultural projects which do not meet investment-grade criteria would not be prioritized, citing a proposal that would take more than a decade before a return on investment.

"At 8 percent, it would take 12 years to recover the investment. That is not good business," he explained.

He also encouraged the farming sector to diversify its products to build resilience. Instead of the One Town, One Product model, he suggested cultivating multiple commodities to counter overreliance on a single crop.

However, he said that growing too many crops could also lead to inefficiencies. Farmers should also take a balanced approach, he suggested.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/10/business/top-business/tiu-laurel-prioritize-projects-with-good-returns/2052655>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Declining fisheries production in Cebu

*RESURGENCE*

**By Marit Stinus-Cabugon**

**February 10, 2025**

DURING a recent visit to Cebu, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. commended political leaders of Central Visayas for making the region the fastest-growing region in the Philippines in 2023 (PIA, Feb. 5, 2025). The region's gross domestic product grew by 7.3 percent, compared to the 5.5 percent growth logged at the national level. The four provinces — Bohol, Cebu, Negros Oriental and Siquijor — and the three highly urbanized cities of Cebu, Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue all recorded growth rates above the national. The growth rates of the HUCs outpaced those of the provinces. Among the four provinces, Cebu province posted the lowest growth at 6 percent (2018 prices).

Cebu is the fifth most populous province in the country (2020 census). Its gross domestic product was in 2023 the sixth largest among the country's 82 provinces and the only province outside of Luzon in the top 10.

Proximity to the capital city or metropolis is obviously a factor in economic development. We see the same in Cebu. Data from 2021 indicates that poverty incidence rises the farther away from Metro Cebu one gets. The good news is that the province has made tremendous strides in bringing down poverty since the double whammy of the pandemic — which shut down tourism on which Cebu depends much — and Typhoon Odette (Dec. 16, 2021). While Cebu province had the lowest per capita income in Central Visayas as of 2023, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported a significant decline in poverty incidence from 36.5 percent in 2021 to 21.9 percent in 2023.

Agriculture, forestry and fishing accounted for 8.9 percent of Cebu's gross domestic product in 2023 (2018 prices). According to PSA's 2022 Census of Agriculture and Fisheries, around 520,000 persons (15 percent of the population) are engaged in agriculture in Cebu. Some 30,639 households, on the other hand, have at least one person engaged in fisheries. This is approximately 3.8 percent of all households, or some 125,000 individuals, who depend on fisheries as a major or minor source of income.

This modest number reflects the reality that Cebu's fisheries sector has shrunk considerably in the past 20 years. The volume of total production — commercial fisheries, municipal fisheries, and aquaculture — was 25,987 metric tons (MT) in 2023, a huge drop from 2022's 44,890 MT (PSA, Oct. 30, 2024). Aquaculture and municipal fisheries suffered declines above 50 percent, while the commercial fisheries sector, coming from an all-time low, experienced a modest recovery.

While seeing a slight increase from 2023 to 2024, marine capture fisheries — commercial and municipal — production was only at two-thirds of its 2022 level. But that is only a tiny part of the picture. According to data collated by Karagatan Patrol (I couldn't find historical data from government sources), the volume of Cebu's capture fisheries production went from 75,000 MT in 2005 to 23,000 MT in 2024. Commercial fisheries dominated 20 years ago, with annual catch reaching 50,000 MT in 2005. The volume declined until 2022, when it reached 6,000 MT. Marine municipal fisheries, on the other hand, peaked in 2020 and 2021 at 50,000 MT and 48,000 MT,

respectively, but then dropped sharply to an estimated 15,000 MT in 2024. Overall, Cebu's marine capture fisheries today produce only a third of the volume it produced in 2005.

Cebu was once famous for its rattan furniture. Massive deforestation, however, spelled the end of the furniture industry as we knew it, depleting domestically available raw materials. The necessity of managing our natural resources in a sustainable manner should have been the lesson learned from that experience. Sure enough, an annual three-month closed fishing season has been implemented in the Visayan Sea since 2013. The Tañon Strait is a protected seascape. Relevant laws and regulations have been enforced. These measures notwithstanding, Cebu's capture fisheries production continues to decline. The BFAR Central Visayas blamed the "illicit use of commercial fishing methods" and the use of fine mesh nets for the meager 2023 production (The Daily Tribune, Nov. 22, 2023). Is this type of lawlessness alone to blame for the emptying of fishing grounds? Has the destruction of the marine environment rendered the fishing grounds unproductive? Do we have large-scale unreported fishing?

Cebu's case of diminishing fisheries production is, on a national scale, neither the only one nor the most extreme. Iloilo's fisheries, for example, have fared even worse. Fishing grounds in the Philippines and worldwide are under severe stress due to a multitude of factors, including pollution, climate change, overfishing, reclamation activities and destructive fishing methods. The Mercedar ruling, by declaring the jurisdiction of LGUs over municipal waters unconstitutional, has introduced even more uncertainty into the management of marine resources in the Philippines, including Cebu. But that doesn't change the fact that it is in everybody's interest to ensure that there will still be fish to catch for us tomorrow and for the generations to come.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/10/opinion/columns/declining-fisheries-production-in-cebu/2052684>

## BUSINESS MIRROR:

# Amid inflation woes, BSP easing seen mild

Cai U. Ordinario  
February 10, 2025



**GRAIN DEAL** At a Kadiwa ng Pangulo stall in Las Piñas, NFA rice is now available at P36 per kilo—well below earlier estimates—as the Department of Agriculture intensifies measures amid a declared food security emergency. A recent survey by Social Weather Stations and Stratbase Group revealed that 59 percent of Filipinos experienced the steepest price hike for rice in the last three months of 2024, compared to 25 percent for meat, 11 percent for vegetables, and 4 percent for seafood.

THE Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) may be less aggressive in easing monetary policy rates as the country continues to be hounded by its inflation woes, according to a US-based think tank.

International financial institutions also expect the BSP to implement “a more gradual” easing of Monetary Policy this year. Nonetheless, a rate cut remains expected this week.

In its latest economic brief, GlobalSource Partners Country Analyst Diwa Guinigundo said reducing the required reserve ratio (RRR) is already helping increase money supply into the market.

“Most important, and this is our view, there is less compulsion for the BSP to be more aggressive in easing monetary policy through the policy rates, precisely because it has also been pumping more liquidity into the system by its significant reduction in the RRR,” Guinigundo said.

The former BSP Deputy Governor said the RRR is now in single-digits after the BSP reduced it by 250 basis points to 7 percent from 9.5 percent.

This has infused the market with “hundreds of billions of extra money supply” which analysts said could reach over P300 billion based on the country’s full year GDP. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/23/rrr-cut-like-liquidity-infusion-of-%E2%82%B1310b-%E2%82%B1330b-nomura/>).

Guinigundo believes the reduction of the RRR could help address the cost and profit concerns of banks as this reduces their “opportunity loss” created by deposits that sit in their vaults without interest.



“Instead of their deposits sitting idly without interest at the BSP, the BSP effectively gives it back to the banks and in the process increases their loanable funds,” Guinigundo said.

“With the BSP’s policy rates down, banks have no excuse not to adjust both their high lending and low deposit rates. The credit channel could then become a more effective channel of monetary policy in helping achieve economic growth,” he added.

Guinigundo said food inflation remains a concern in the country, especially after the declaration of a food security emergency by the Department of Agriculture (DA) last week.

He noted that the National Price Coordinating Council made the recommendation because of the “extraordinary rise in local rice prices.” Rice carries a weight of 8.87 percent in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Apart from this, the country faces spillover effects from the latest policy shifts in the United States such as the higher tariffs on countries like Canada and Mexico; lower taxes for big businesses that could be inflationary; and the deportation of immigrants.

“Government functionaries in the departments of agriculture, trade and industry, energy, science and technology and local governments are accountable for the poor food production, logistics and supply management that have abetted the persistence of high prices,” Guinigundo said.

### **The IFIs’ view**

Meanwhile, given these inflation concerns, international financial institutions expect the BSP to implement a more gradual reduction in policy rates.

HSBC Asean Economist Aris Dacanay said they expect the BSP to ease policy rates by as much as 75 basis points this year to bring down key interest rates to 5 percent by the fourth quarter of 2025.

Dacanay said they expect the BSP to cut by 25bp each in February (1Q), August (3Q), and December (4Q) this year.

He said while no rate cut will be made in the second quarter, they expect the BSP to again reduce the RRR by 200 basis points, bringing down the RRR to 5 percent from the current 7 percent.

“But caution is warranted. Upside risks to the policy rate outlook linger with uncertainty over how potential trade policies in the US will affect the Fed outlook,” Dacanay, however, said.

Meanwhile, Citi Economist for the Philippines Nalin Chutchotitham said one may expect the BSP to deliver a 25-basis-point policy rate cut this week on the back of weaker GDP growth and a moderate inflation outlook.

With a rate cut expected this week, Chutchotitham said, key policy rates will ease to 5.5 percent. She noted that 2024 GDP growth was weaker than expected at 5.6 percent.

She thinks BSP will also reduce rates by 25 basis points in June and August. Further reductions in policy rates will depend on global growth as well as the easing of monetary policy in the United States.

“Timing of subsequent rate cuts remains data-dependent, although we maintain our calls for June and August, as the monetary policy stance remains tight, considering historical real neutral rate,” Chutchotitham said.

The economist also said Citi revised its inflation forecasts by 0.1 percentage point to 3.2 percent in 2025 and 3.3 percent in 2026.

### **MB report’s concerns**

Chutchotitham said the Monetary Board also highlighted some concerns over higher wages that could lead to faster inflation.

Citing the BSP's Monetary Policy Report, Chutchotitham said the 8.1-percent increase in minimum wage was approved across 16 out of 17 regions. In Metro Manila, the wage increase was pegged at 5.7 percent in the second half of 2024.

“Aside from the general elections in May, we think that BSP could pause in April to reassess overall inflation risks, which may come from the expected rise of water and electricity rates during the year, and the programmed tax increases of alcohol [6 percent] & tobacco [5 percent] from the Universal Healthcare Act, according to the BSP's Q4 2024 Monetary Policy Report,” Chutchotitham said.

Meanwhile, ANZ said the BSP is expected to lower its policy rate by 25 basis points to 5.5 percent in its upcoming monetary policy meeting this week. For 2025, ANZ expects the BSP to cut rate by 75 basis points.

ANZ noted that with inflation reaching 2.9 percent in January 2025, unchanged from December 2024, there was an increase in food inflation in January 2025.

Based on the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), food has a 34.78- percent weight in the CPI. Rice has the largest weight among food items, followed by Meat and Other Parts of Slaughtered Land Animals at 6.43 percent and Fish and Other Seafood, 5.66 percent.

“Although food inflation accelerated in January 2025, it was driven mainly by higher vegetables and meat prices. As these price rises were driven by inclement weather conditions late last year, they are likely to be temporary,” ANZ said.

“More importantly, rice prices which tend to have a more durable impact on overall inflation, have been more well behaved and should moderate further as the government allows for the release of buffer rice stocks. On balance, the outlook for inflation is benign,” it added.

Earlier, the PSA and local economists said that despite the decline in rice prices, the Philippines still faces a double whammy of high food and oil prices that could lead to faster inflation this year.

On Wednesday, PSA reported that inflation averaged 2.9 percent in January 2025, faster than the 2.8 percent posted in the same period last year. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/05/inflation-stands-at-2-9-in-january-psa/>).

At a briefing, National Statistician Claire Dennis S. Mapa cited indications that oil and LPG prices could increase.

In terms of food, Mapa said the PSA will closely monitor meat, fish, and vegetables—the same commodities that posted high inflation in January 2025.

Image credits: [NONIE REYES](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/10/amid-inflation-woes-bsp-easing-seen-mild/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **PHL sardine industry gets boost as tamban joins Codex global standards**

Ada Pelonia  
February 10, 2025

The inclusion of the sardine species tamban in the international food standards body eases trade barriers and boosts the country's fisheries sector, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA). The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) officially included tamban (*Sardinella lemuru*) in the Codex Standard for Canned Sardines and Sardine-Type Products or CXS 94-1981, which the agency said resolved the long-standing export challenges, particularly to major markets like Europe.

"This landmark event eliminates trade barriers, enhances global market access, and elevates the country's position in the sardine industry," the DA said in a statement.

In 2013, the agency said researchers discovered that tamban had often been misidentified as another sardine species, which created confusion.

This caused concern in 2016 and 2017 when European Union (EU) authorities rejected shipments of Philippine canned sardines since tamban was not listed in their product standards, it added.

"The EU's strict requirements for sardine species led to missed export opportunities, costing the Philippine sardine industry valuable market access."

To hurdle this challenge, the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) implemented a series of projects aimed at including tamban in the list of authorized species for export in global markets.

Thus, in 2020, the Philippines submitted a proposal to the Codex Secretariat to include tamban in the Codex Standard. During the 43rd CAC session, the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (CCFFP) was reactivated to review the proposal.

Norway recommended the Philippines lead the Electronic Working Group (EWG) to establish scientific evidence. The proposal received broad support and underwent extensive technical and sensory evaluation. The amendment was adopted on November 27, 2024.

The agency noted that this inclusion aligns Philippine sardine products with global standards, ensuring compliance with EU regulations and opening new export markets for local products.

"The addition of *Sardinella lemuru* in the Codex Standard highlights the Philippines' commitment to innovation, quality, and global competitiveness," the DA said.

"This significant move strengthens the country's reputation as a trusted supplier of premium sardine products, solidifying its role as a key player in the international seafood market."

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/10/tamban-in-codex-seen-boosting-phl-sardines-export/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **New BFAR chief told to protect small fishers**

Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz

February 10, 2025

The chairman of the House Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries Resource called on the newly appointed chief of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to maintain the agency's "laser focus" on protecting and uplifting the country's small-scale fishers.

House Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources Chairperson Brian Raymund Yamsuan lauded BFAR Director Elizer Salilig's "passion and dedication to help over two million marginalized fisherfolk break free from the cycle of poverty that has plagued them for decades."

"We certainly welcome the President's appointment of Mr. Elizer Salilig as the new national director of BFAR. Director Salilig's vast institutional memory and experience, especially when it comes to improving the plight of poor fishing communities, certainly assures us that with him at the helm, BFAR would be able to expand and enhance its programs to support our beleaguered fishers and boost our food security."

Salilig and several key officials of the BFAR made a courtesy call on Yamsuan last week.

The lawmaker said safeguarding the interests of small fishers is crucial at this time when their survival could be threatened by a Supreme Court (SC) decision which cleared the way for commercial fishing companies to gain unobstructed access to municipal waters.

The SC First Division upheld a 2023 Malabon Regional Trial Court (RTC) decision that declared unconstitutional certain provisions of the Fisheries Code granting small-scale fishers preferential access to municipal waters. Under the law, these waters—spanning 15 kilometers from the shore—were reserved for small fishers to safeguard their livelihoods and ensure marine ecosystem sustainability.

BFAR has already filed a motion urging the Supreme Court to reconsider its ruling.

During his meeting with Yamsuan, Salilig affirmed that BFAR is prioritizing this legal battle while also exploring possible amendments to the Fisheries Code to strike a balance between municipal and commercial fishing interests.

In response, Yamsuan said his committee is prepared to conduct an inquiry into the social and economic consequences of the SC ruling, following a resolution filed by fellow lawmakers seeking an investigation.

"We are just waiting for the action of the Committee on Rules on the resolution and its referral in plenary session to our panel."

Congress adjourned on February 5 and will resume session on June 2.

Yamsuan remains confident that Salilig's leadership will bring "meaningful reforms" to the fisheries sector. He said Salilig, a seasoned career official, has long been an ally of small fishers, with programs focused on empowering municipal fishing communities.

"The irony is that our small fishers remain among the poorest of the poor despite our abundant marine resources. We are happy to learn that Director Salilig has long been helping municipal fishing communities in processing and marketing their catch, along with assisting them in utilizing modern tools as a means to raise their incomes," he said.

"We will work with Director Salilig to assist him in getting his programs implemented on a nationwide scale and with sufficient funding."

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/10/new-bfar-chief-told-to-protect-small-fishers/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **Imported rice arrivals fall by half in Jan–BPI**

Ada Pelonia

February 10, 2025

Rice arrivals in January declined by more than half compared to the volume that entered the country in the same month last year, based on latest government data.

Figures from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) showed that the volume of rice shipments that arrived in the Philippines last month reached 229,939 metric tons (MT), 53.57 percent lower than the 429,260.80 MT recorded in January 2024.

Of the volume that arrived in the country, BPI data indicated that 158,464.40 MT came from Vietnam. Thailand was the second-largest supplier, accounting for 32,029.75 MT.

The Philippines also imported rice from other countries, such as Pakistan (26,425 MT), Myanmar (8,403 MT), and South Korea (2,000 MT).

BPI data indicated that the agency approved and issued 471 sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs) for the purchase of 379,682.98 MT of imported rice.

Under the rice tariffication law, importers should secure an SPSIC from the BPI to ensure that an inbound shipment is safe for human and animal consumption.

### **Wholesale prices**

Meanwhile, preliminary data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that the average wholesale price of regular milled rice shrank by 10 percent to P42.18 per kilo in January from P46.86 per kilo a year ago.

The fastest decline in regular milled rice was registered in Soccsksargen, where the price of the staple declined by 15.8 percent to P39.51 per kilo last month from P46.92 per kilo in the previous year.

This was followed by Western Visayas where the average price slid by 13.8 percent to P39.88 per kilo from P46.27 per kilo in January 2024.

The average price last month was also 3.3 percent lower than the P43.60 per kilo recorded in December.

Meanwhile, the PSA said the average wholesale price of well-milled rice declined by 6.7 percent to P46.71 per kilo last month from P50.07 per kilo a year ago.

The fastest drop was also recorded in Soccsksargen as prices fell by 14.6 percent in January to P42.75 per kilo from P50.04 per kilo in January 2024.

Caraga region trailed behind with a 12.6-percent decline in rice prices to P43.20 per kilo last month from the P49.43 per kilo recorded in the previous year.

The average price of well-milled rice was 1.8 percent lower than the P47.57 per kilo registered in December.

Prevailing retail prices of imported rice in Metro Manila markets stood at P45 per kilo for well-milled and P42 per kilo for regular milled, while local rice was P46 per kilo for well-milled and P41 per kilo for regular milled, based on the latest government price monitoring report.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/10/imported-rice-arrivals-fall-by-half-in-jan-bpi/>