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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Marcos: Fast-track projects in Western Visayas

**BY TARA YAP**

Feb 16, 2025 03:32 PM

ILOILO CITY – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has directed officials to fast-track infrastructure projects in Western Visayas.



**PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. (center) presides over the Regional Development Council meeting in Iloilo City on Feb. 13. (PCO)**

The President made the directive during the Regional Development Council-6 meeting here on Thursday, Feb. 13.

Among these projects is the Jalaur River Multipurpose Project-Phase II (JRMP II) in Calinog, Iloilo. Marcos inaugurated the project last July but is not yet operational. The JRMP-II still needs to complete canals that connect the three major dams to irrigation lines.

Marcos also ordered officials to prioritize the proposed trans-link bridges connecting the islands of Panay, Guimaras, and Negros.

The project is still in the detailed engineering stages even as the Marcos administration as well as the administrations of former Presidents Rodrigo Duterte and Benigno Aquino III claimed this was a priority project.

Marcos was also briefed on agriculture, education, water, tourism, and flood mitigation projects.

The President was joined in the meeting by Secretaries Arsenio Balisacan of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and regional directors of key national government agencies.

The meeting was attended by local government officials, including Governors Arthur “Toto” Defensor Jr. of Iloilo, Jose Enrique Miraflores of Aklan, Rhodora Cadio of Antique, Fredenil Castro of Capiz, JC Rahman Nava of Guimaras, as well as Mayors Jerry Treñas of Iloilo City and Mayor Alfredo “Albee” Benitez of Bacolod City.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/16/marcos-fast-track-projects-in-western-visayas>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Marcos Jr. brings job fair to Mindanao

**Ghio Ong** - The Philippine Star

February 16, 2025 | 12:00am



**I'M JUST A VERY INTERESTED OBSERVER:** President Marcos said he advised his son, Ilocos Norte Rep. Sandro Marcos, to support the impeachment process, but that he himself is merely an observer.

RYAN BALDEMOR

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos brought on Saturday the government's Trabaho Para sa Bagong Pilipinas – a job-matching initiative for graduating beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) – to Mindanao.

Over 28 employers participated in the job fair held at the New City Hall in Tagum City, Davao del Norte.

The job fair – led by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) – is intended for 4Ps beneficiaries to assist them in finding stable jobs to become self-sufficient.

In his remarks, Marcos vowed to bring the program to different parts of the country as part of his administration's efforts to uplift the lives of every Filipino.

"I will do everything to spread this program throughout the country. I wish you all success. Coupled with this is my plea that hopefully you take advantage of the opportunities that are in front of you" the President said.

"This is in fulfillment of our mandate and our promise to raise the standard of living of every Filipino family, especially our beneficiaries of the 4Ps and also of TUPAD," Marcos said, referring to DOLE's Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers.

Marcos said the government also continues to enhance the delivery of services to help Filipinos find jobs and achieve their dreams.

He said the Trabaho Para sa Bagong Pilipinas is more than just providing work but it is also about "matching" the skills of applicants.

"We match the skills of the seekers, of the applicants, to the job where he is suitable, to the kind of work he can do," the Chief Executive said.

The DSWD targeted around 3,000 job seekers to be hired at the Tagum City job fair, mostly beneficiaries of the DSWD's Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation and TUPAD program.

Other government agencies such as the Department of Trade and Industry, Pag-IBIG Fund, Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Social Security System and the National Bureau of Investigation also provided pre-employment documentation and advisory services, according to the President.

Marcos said when the Trabaho Para sa Bagong Pilipinas was launched in January, over a thousand of around 9,000 job applicants were hired on the spot.

Prior to delivering his message, Marcos toured booths and interacted with around 38 participating sellers and buyers at the Department of Agriculture-led Kadiwa ng Pangulo.

The country's unemployment rate dropped to its lowest in December last year, according to the PSA. The PSA's Labor Force Survey showed that the unemployment rate dipped slightly to 3.1 percent in December last year from 3.2 percent in November, bringing the full-year average to 3.8 percent, the lowest since 2005.

This translates to 1.63 million jobless Filipinos in December 2024, down from 1.66 million in the previous month, but higher than the 1.60 million in December 2023.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/16/2421828/marcos-jr-brings-job-fair-mindanao>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Iwahig Prison expands agri production, boosts inmate skills and revenue

By: [Tetch Torres-Tupas](#) - Reporter / [@T2TupasINQ](#)  
[INQUIRER.net](#) / 09:05 AM February 16, 2025



An inmate works at a rice field at the Iwahig Penal Farm. —Photo by Tetch Torres-Tupas | INQUIRER.net

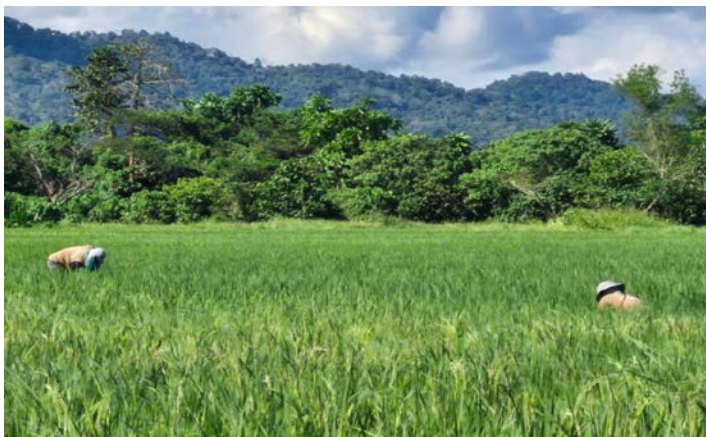
PUERTO PRINCESA, Palawan — Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm (IPPF) has started revitalizing its agricultural production by expanding rice fields, livestock production, and fisheries.

In 2024, IPPF generated P5 million from rice production alone.

“May iba pa tayong tanim, meron din tilapia at may kinikita rin tayo sa livestock,” Superintendent Gary Garcia of IPPF said.

(We have other crops as well, plus tilapia, and we also earn from livestock.)

He said they started with 60 hectares of rice fields in 2024. This year, Garcia said, they have increased it to 100 hectares.

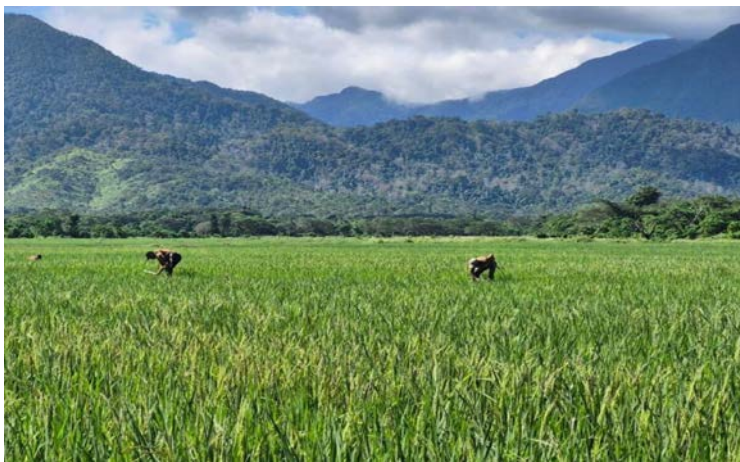


Inmates or persons deprived of liberty working at the rice fields inside Iwahig Penal Farm. —Photo by Tetch Torres-Tupas | INQUIRER.net

To ensure that the farm produce will make its way to the market, Iwahig made sure that IPPF's produce is integrated into the Kadiwa marketing system as well as other alternative avenues for distribution.

“Meron po tayong appraisal committee para sa price. Tinitingnan kung tama para sa tamang pag dispose ng mga products,” Garcia said.

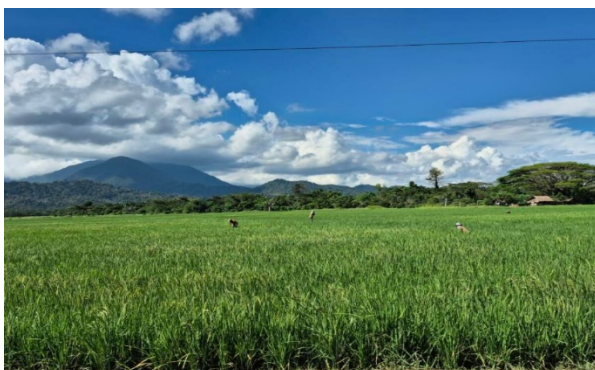
(An appraisal committee was also formed to assess pricing strategies, ensuring farm products could be efficiently disposed of at fair market rates.)



Inmates or persons deprived of liberty working at the rice fields inside Iwahig Penal Farm. —Photo by Tetch Torres-Tupas | INQUIRER.net

IPPF is also enhancing the production of high-value crops such as corn. At least 30 hectares are allotted for cashew, aquaculture products such as tilapia, and poultry products, specifically Parawakan, a kind of native chicken found in Palawan. IPPF also has 189 cattle, several buffalos, and goats.

Aside from generating substantial income, the program also provides inmates with valuable sustainable farming skills.



Inmates or persons deprived of liberty working at the rice fields inside Iwahig Penal Farm. —Photo by Tetch Torres-Tupas | INQUIRER.net

Bureau of Corrections Director General Gregorio Catapang Jr. said the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority has been helping the inmates enhance their agro-related skills.

“We really want them to have a second chance. We want to make sure na pag lumaya sila (once they are released), they can have a second chance,” Catapang said.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2035141/iwahig-prison-expands-agri-production-boosts-inmate-skills-and-revenue>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# ASEAN agricultural trade touted as opportunity to boost food security

February 16, 2025 | 8:29 pm



REUTERS

By **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**, *Reporter*

THE GOVERNMENT needs to pursue more agro-food deals with the rest of Southeast Asia to address still-high food costs, economists and industry officials said.

They were commenting on the Philippine-Cambodia agriculture partnership signed last week allowing the Philippines to invest in Cambodian rice production, specifically milling, possibly paving the way for future collaboration in animal feed.

“We need to pursue food-related deals with our ASEAN partners not only for our food security but also as a signatory to the Regional Cooperation and Economic Partnership (RCEP),” according to Danilo V. Fausto, president of the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food, Inc.

“Fisheries and processed fruits and coconut products have good growth potential because of our ASEAN partnership,” he said via Viber.

Mr. Fausto said the Philippines needs to enter into government-to-government arrangements with its ASEAN partners “with respect to rice and other essential food imports to bring down prices of our food products.”

The Philippines has declared a food security emergency, citing an “extraordinary” spike in the prices of the grain despite lower import tariffs.

In 2024, Philippine rice imports hit a record 4.68 million metric tons (MMT), from 3.6 MMT a year earlier.

“While cooperation with Cambodia offers many benefits, limiting engagement to just one country would miss out on diverse trade, investment, and innovation opportunities,” Leonardo A. Lanzona, an economics professor at the Ateneo de Manila, said.

“A multi-country approach is much better in strengthening resilience, enhancing competitiveness, and maximizing agricultural growth,” he added via Messenger chat.

The Department of Agriculture said last week that Cambodia will gradually be an important agricultural trading partner “as the Philippines diversifies its markets, particularly for rice.”

The deal with Cambodia “envisions enhanced collaboration in agricultural planning, animal feed development, animal health protection, irrigation management, and agricultural marketing systems,” it said.

The DA said both countries will also explore the exchange of non-geographical indication-protected plant commodities to foster agricultural diversity and innovation.

It said discussions were underway to explore trade in vegetables and meat.

Roy S. Kempis, director of the Center for Business Innovation at the Angeles University Foundation, said the Philippines should also consider long-term partnerships with Vietnam and Thailand.



“Others which have vast tracts of land that can produce food include Myanmar, Cambodia, and Malaysia,” he added via Viber.

He backed pursuing ties with countries that have renewable energy technology in irrigation, such as Singapore, Vietnam, and Thailand.

Areas in the Philippine food chain that have the potential to grow significantly due to ASEAN ties include rice milling, shipping and distribution, research and development, irrigation, and renewable energy, according to Mr. Kempis.

He said deals with ASEAN neighbors should aim for advanced technology and rice milling R&D.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/02/16/653527/asean-agricultural-trade-touted-as-opportunity-to-boost-food-security/>

**REMATE:**

# Fishing ban sa Zamboanga Peninsula, Visayan Sea inalis na

February 16, 2025 14:31



MANILA, Philippines – Inalis na ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) ang tatlong buwang closed fishing season sa Zamboanga Peninsula at Visayan Sea na ginagawa upang mapanatili ang populasyon ng ilang uri isda sa lugar.

Maaari nang magbalik sa operasyon ang commercial fishers ng sardinas sa conservation area ng Zamboanga Peninsula, partikular na sa mga dagat ng East Sulu, Basilan Strait, and Sibuguey Bay.

Pinapayagan na rin ang commercial fishing ng sardinas, herrings, at mackerel sa mga dagat sa Visayan Sea.

Ipinatupad ng BFAR ang fishing ban noong Nobyembre 15, 2024 bilang bahagi ng conservation effort ng mga partikular na species ng isda sa Visayas at Mindanao regions. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/fishing-ban-sa-zamboanga-peninsula-visayan-sea-inalis-na/>

**REMATE:**

# Komento ni ex-PRRD sa presyo ng bigas, sinupalpal ng solon: Wala kang ginawa

February 16, 2025 11:41



MANILA, Philippines – Sinupalpal ni House Assistant Majority Leader at Tingog party-list Rep. Jude Acidre si dating Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa naging kritisismo nito kay Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. kaugnay sa presyo ng bigas.

Sa proclamation rally para sa senatorial slates ng Partido Demokratiko Pilipino (PDP), kung saan si Duterte ang party chair, sinabi nito na wala man lamang magawa si Marcos sa presyo ng bigas.

“Kung sa termino mo, former President Digong, walang nagawa para pababain ang presyo ng bigas. ‘Wag mong itulad sa kasalukuyang termino ni Presidente Marcos. May nagagawa, may ginagawa. Pero ikaw, puro ngawa,” tugon ni Acidre.

Tinukoy ni Acidre ang deklarasyon ng food security emergency ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ngayong buwan.

Nagbigay-daan ang deklarasyong ito sa DA na maglabas ng rice buffer stocks mula sa National Food Authority para mapababa ang presyo ng bigas.

“This is not just another policy announcement. This is a nationwide mobilization of resources to bring down the price of rice. At hindi ito puro pangako. May aktwal na ginagawa,” ayon pa kay Acidre.

“Noong panahon mo, walang food security emergency declaration. Walang konkretong solusyon sa presyo ng bigas. Tapos ngayon, ikaw pa ang matapang magsalita? Kung wala kang naitulong noon, ‘wag kang humarang ngayon,” pagpapatuloy ng mambabatas. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/komento-ni-ex-prrd-sa-presyo-ng-bigas-sinupalpal-ng-solon-wala-kang-ginawa/>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# The real emergency? The clueless billionaire at the DA

*SUNDAY STORIES*

**By Marlen V. Ronquillo**

**February 16, 2025**

I WROTE about this before. William Dar, the highly credentialed secretary of agriculture during former president Rodrigo Duterte's administration, was a miserable failure for some unfathomable reasons. He tried to cover up his failure in food productivity — the main mandate of the Department of Agriculture (DA) — by creating a massive press release factory, hoping that propaganda blitzes would work in a nation where most people are glued to their little screens, afflicted with brain rot.

Indeed, very few people noticed that in 2019, the year the Rice Tariffication Law was implemented, we imported a record 3.1 million metric tons (MT) of rice, the first time any country imported that much of the staple. That opened the floodgate for reckless, greed-driven rice imports. Nonstop, I would add, that failed to bring down rice prices.

That was then. Today, nothing much has changed. Let me correct that: things have gotten worse.

Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., the billionaire now leading the DA, outdid Dar. Tiu Laurel created a propaganda machine like no other. Over the prostrate body of the agriculture sector, Tiu and his posse of equally clueless undersecretaries and assistant secretaries (they number more than a dozen) built a façade of efficiency and competence by carpet-bombing the mass media, often gullible and unquestioning, with their flights of fancy, mostly about supposed major initiatives in the agriculture sector that often involved "billions" of state investments.

For ports, P30 billion. For cold storage, P3 billion. For irrigation projects, which the Commission on Audit said around P2 billion worth of projects have stalled, unlimited billions of pesos. Allocation for drones, for God's sake. Or digitization. Or carving a development roadmap for each critical crop, starting with rice. The latest is a P20-billion fund proposed by Congress for a supposed animal competitiveness fund. Tiu Laurel speaks the language of billionaires, always in monetary terms that are beyond the grasp of small farmers like myself. Like Dar, Tiu Laurel rightly sensed that most Filipinos would probably spend their time on Pornhub (we lead the world in visits to the porn site) than pay attention to critical issues like food productivity.

But as the Bard said, lies, obfuscations and untruths all end up badly. Beneath the propaganda blitz and the façade that something is being done to lift the agriculture sector from the sinkhole where it has fallen, the sector's rotting carcass is all that is left. We notched the uber-embarrassing record as the world's top rice importer three years in a row (2022, 2023, 2024), and the United States Department of Agriculture projected that we would import 5 million MT of rice this year. That's half of what China, a manufacturing powerhouse with its 1.4 billion people, will import.

You always measure agriculture's performance in terms of productivity, and the data don't lie. While being the top rice importer three years straight — and maybe in 2025 and beyond — is a global embarrassment, last year saw the output of the second most important crop, sugar, hit

a 25-year low. The third most important crop, yellow corn, is about to post 1 million MT in imports. We used to be the top or second biggest banana exporter, but now we are fourth.

Time and again, those who care about the agriculture sector have been bemoaning that finding a single bright spot in the sector is just like finding a needle in a haystack.

The epic failure of Tiu Laurel's stewardship of the sector would not have resurfaced had he and his clueless posse given propagandizing and cheap gimmickry a rest. But no, their latest gig is to cause the declaration of a rice-centric "food security emergency" to supposedly lower rice prices. This cheap gimmick involves selling Kadiwa rice to local government units and setting a suggested retail price for rice at P55 per kilo.

But what about intensifying rice productivity, incentivizing small rice farmers, and using the moral suasion of government to convince Congress to scrap the reckless, greed-driven and profit-motivated Rice Tariffication Law? Tiu Laurel and his posse are not up to this task. So, in lieu of hard work, we now see the almost comical attempt to lower rice prices through an "emergency food declaration."

When the government decided to import rice from Myanmar's genocidal regime — in desperation, I think — those looking into the rice economics of the country thought what would follow would be a downward price spiral. Because rice from Myanmar, where the military government is waging a war against its own citizens, is relatively cheap and can be sold at P35 to P38 per kilo. But even the unconscionable act of importing rice from Myanmar did not cause the rice prices to settle down to their natural equilibrium.

So, we are now in this unfortunate state of a "food security emergency."

Remember, the appointment of billionaire Tiu Laurel to the DA's top post was hailed by economic pundits as a break from the supposed mediocrity of those in the department who spent their whole lives working there and rising through the ranks. Now, with him clutching at straws and doing stewardship work via propaganda and cheap gimmicky, the great unraveling of clueless billionaires named to government posts is now in full public view.

Tiu Laurel's epic failure should be a cautionary tale to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. In case he has not noticed, his ship of state is being dragged by deadweights like Tiu Laurel — a billionaire, yes, but also an incompetent and certified failure.

[https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/16/opinion/columns/the-real-emergency-the-clueless-billionaire-at-the-da/2056447?fbclid=IwY2xjawIfaQlleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHdKSaANSf9-ChQjJXze5lesdNjUW8nAHslTUdU9eoLINvWkHVu5cjjLp\\_w\\_aem\\_SjAhEom3sqNykT TV6-IjXg](https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/16/opinion/columns/the-real-emergency-the-clueless-billionaire-at-the-da/2056447?fbclid=IwY2xjawIfaQlleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHdKSaANSf9-ChQjJXze5lesdNjUW8nAHslTUdU9eoLINvWkHVu5cjjLp_w_aem_SjAhEom3sqNykT TV6-IjXg)

## BUSINESS MIRROR:

# As egg prices top \$7 a dozen, demand for vegan substitutes soars

Bloomberg News

February 16, 2025



The price for a dozen eggs at a grocery store in New York is listed at above \$10 on February 12.

Surging egg prices and shortages in the United States have created a big opportunity for vegan substitutes made with ingredients such as mung beans.

Vegan egg companies are boosting production, expanding distribution and planning to cut prices to take advantage as chicken egg costs hit new highs.

At Eat Just Inc., sales in January jumped by five times from the same period a year earlier. The company is ramping up production of its Just Egg products, which can be found at retailers such as Whole Foods and Walmart.

The closely held firm uses mung beans and canola oil in its egg alternative, which comes in liquid form and a folded version that can be toasted. At retailers, Just Egg sales have accelerated, with one major chain, which the company declined to name, posting weekly gains on a year-over-year basis as high as 70 percent.

“This is probably the most important moment for a plant-based market,” Josh Tetrick, Eat Just’s chief executive officer, said in an interview.

With bird flu killing millions of egg-laying chickens, egg prices have been breaking records. The national average wholesale price rose to \$7.34 per dozen last week, according to data from the US Department of Agriculture. That’s a 10 percent jump from a week earlier and another all-time high.

That’s reduced the big price advantage chicken eggs once had. A 16-ounce carton of liquid Just Egg, which is the equivalent of 10 eggs, retails for about \$8.

“Consumers are often interested in trying new products, but are less likely to try novel products priced at a significant premium,” said Alex Frederick, an analyst for researcher PitchBook. Availability is also becoming a competitive advantage. Egg shortages have been reported across the US, with lines forming outside stores. Meanwhile, restaurant chain Waffle House is adding an egg surcharge.

Tetrick posted on social media platform X this week that “reliable eggs are made from plants” with a photo of empty shelves. The only fully-stocked shelf in view had Just Egg products.

“We’ve spoken to a couple major retailers who think this might be the new normal, and by new normal, meaning continued consistent egg shortages and high egg prices because of the nature of bird flu,” Tetrick said. “This could be a permanent fixture of our food system.”

At Yo Egg, which uses soy and chickpeas, CEO Eran Groner said shortages of chicken eggs are pushing restaurants to look at eggless eggs as a kind of insurance policy. One of the company’s offerings—a sunny-side-up vegan egg—sells for about \$1.80 per egg, according to a website that caters to the restaurant industry.

Groner plans to make the company’s products more appealing by cutting prices by about 10 percent, while expanding distribution and the its product lineup.

In the US, vegan eggs are estimated to account for less than \$2 billion in annual sales, a sliver of the overall egg market, according to PitchBook. They started to gain traction around 2019 with a marketing pitch centered on health claims, such as lower cholesterol, and less impact on the environment.

Vegan eggs are part of a boom in investments into alternatives to animal food products. It’s a trend with varying responses by consumers.

Plant-based milk has become a stable and growing part of that sector. Meat alternatives surged earlier this decade thanks to companies such as Beyond Meat Inc. and Impossible Foods Inc. But after trying them, many Americans went back to animal protein.

The so-called great American egg shortage is the next big test.

Image credits: [Bloomberg](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/16/as-egg-prices-top-7-a-dozen-demand-for-vegan-substitutes-soars/>