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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Modern dairy farm in Bohol eyed in DA-France collaboration

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Feb 17, 2025 06:13 AM



Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel shaking hands with Phylum Managing Partner Francois Gary (Embassy of France in Manila photo)

The National Dairy Authority (NDA), an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA), is teaming up with France-based food consultancy firm Phylum SARL to conduct a feasibility study for the DA's Philippine Dairy Project.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, representing the NDA, signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Phylum, represented by Managing Partner Francois Gary.

In a statement on Saturday, Feb. 15, the DA said the agreement aims to strengthen French-Philippine relations in the dairy sector.

The agency added that modernizing the Philippines' dairy industry is envisioned through the Philippine Dairy Project.

However, the NDA and Phylum will still conduct the feasibility study to assess whether the project qualifies for a concessional loan from the French government.

The study itself will be funded through a grant from Fonds d'études et d'aide au secteur privé (FASEP), a development fund by the French Treasury that supports feasibility studies in foreign markets.

The DA said one of the project's priorities is to establish a modern dairy farm in Ubay, Bohol, with the capacity to house more than 300 cows for milk production.

ADVERTISEMENT

This will include a facility equipped to process up to 10 metric tons (MT) of raw milk daily.

Aside from pursuing training and advisory services, the Philippine Dairy Project will also include collaboration with local cooperatives for milk and fodder production.

It also aims to set up milk collection centers and milk processing facilities in selected areas across the country.

The NDA said it welcomes international collaborations and private sector investments to help improve the country's local dairy industry.

Based on the agency's data, the average milk production per cow in the Philippines remains at a low eight liters per day.

The NTA attributes this low capability to inadequate feed and management practices, high production cost, and insufficient dairy infrastructure.

It explained that the country's milk sufficiency should be higher than the current 1.66 percent, noting how it should be at least five percent or about 80 million liters of milk by 2028.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/17/modern-dairy-farm-in-bohol-eyed-in-da-france-collaboration>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Government proposes ship-out deadline for salt imports

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

February 17, 2025 | 12:00am



A worker collects dried salt from a salt bed in Cavite.

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) wants the country’s salt imports to be shipped out from their countries of origin within two months from approval of their sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs).

The draft salt importation guidelines stipulate that the SPSIC issued by BFAR for food-grade and non-food grade imported salt shall be valid for two months starting from the date of issuance.

This means that the imported salt product must be shipped out of its country of origin within 60 days or else the SPSIC would expire automatically or be canceled.

The SPSIC is a document issued by a competent government authority, which certifies that an imported commodity – in this case salt – is safe for human consumption and does not pose any threat to human, animal or plant life.

Under the draft rules, the SPSIC will indicate the period for which the actual salt shipment should have left its country of origin.

“No food grade or non-food grade salt shall be imported without a sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance issued covering such importation,” the draft guidelines read.

The document is also issued by other government agencies such as the Bureau of Plant Industry and Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) for the importation of plant and animal products, respectively.

Government agencies have varying validity periods for the SPSICs that they issue depending on the concerned imported product. For example, SPSIC for rice imports are valid for 60 days while those for meat imports are valid within 90 days upon issuance.

The draft guidelines also stipulate that the total volume of imported salt in the future could be limited to the standing requirement of the country based on the utilization performance of importers.

“Subsequent issuances shall be based on the volume requirement that can be substantiated after disposition and inventory, which shall not exceed the individual total volume imported from the previous year,” the draft rules state.

Salt importers must apply for SPSIC for at least five working days for the issuance of the document prior to the departure of their shipments from a country of origin, based on the document.

“No shipment shall depart from the country of origin without an SPSIC,” it said.

The draft guidelines noted that it has taken into consideration pertinent provisions of various existing laws in the country with the aim of streamlining existing policies and procedures to expedite bureaucratic transactions in line with the Ease of Doing Business Act.

Sources said BFAR has been undertaking multiple dialogue last year with pertinent government agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), BAI and Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority to discuss the salt importation guidelines.

One of the goals of the salt importation guidelines is to harmonize the existing rules and regulations by various government agencies related to the importation of various salt products and grades.

The draft guidelines cover both food-grade and non-food grade salt pursuant to Section 22 of the Salt Industry Development Act.

For food-grade salt, all salt importers must secure a license to operate (LTO) as an importer from the FDA. Importers bringing non-food grade salt for industrial use must secure an LTO from BFAR while those importing agricultural-grade salt fertilizer must get their LTO from FPA.

Lastly, importers of salt for animal feed must secure LTO from BAI.

The draft rules would be presented during multiple public consultations next month to solicit comments from concerned stakeholders before it would be finalized and approved by the agriculture secretary.

Salt imports have been critical following the enactment into law of the Salt Industry Development Act since tariffs collected from the imported commodity would be earmarked for the development of the domestic salt industry.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/02/17/2421980/government-proposes-ship-out-deadline-salt-imports>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# **BIZ BUZZ: Rice prices going down, but not yet P20/kilo**



BY JORDEENE B. LAGARE  
FEBRUARY 17, 2025



**President Marcos** has yet to fulfill his campaign promise of lowering rice prices to P20 per kilo, but at least retail prices of rice are starting to decline.

The Department of Agriculture's price monitoring showed that as of Feb. 10, rice was being sold in public markets for around P40 a kilogram, from P50 a kilo last year.

Given its recent efforts and the decline in global prices, the agency hopes that retail prices will soon go down to about P30 per kg in the near term.

*"Hindi pa rin siguro... not P20 but possible siguro sa mid-P30s talaga* (Probably not yet... not P20 per kilogram, but maybe around mid-P30 per kilogram realistically speaking)," Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said during a recent market visit in Quezon City.

"World prices are also going down. So, if the world price, theoretically... if the world price of rice goes down, even its inputs including fertilizer should follow," he told reporters.

And that will put the Marcos administration closer to hitting the target of P20 a kilo, perhaps before the end of his term in 2028.

<https://plus.inquirer.net/business/biz-buzz/biz-buzz-rice-prices-going-down-but-not-yet-p20-kilo/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Bugkalot Coffee on the road to recovery from typhoon

February 17, 2025 | 12:03 am



**BUGKALOTCOFFEE.COM**

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

A COFFEE enterprise hit by a major typhoon last year is banking on a recovery on the strength of its business model — which involves control over the entire supply chain and a revenue-sharing model with its growers in the Sierra Madre.

Bugkalot Coffee Co., a social enterprise, processes and markets coffee beans apart from controlling the production side, ensuring uniform quality, according to Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Joseph Tanchi.

“One of the things that sets us apart is that we are a producer, not just a trader or processor,” he said in an e-mail. “Since we produce our own coffee and process it ourselves, we have a high level of operational control and standardization,” he added.

The business has as many as four layers of quality control throughout the post-harvest processing, and has centralized storage and sorting, “which all contribute to a higher quality of coffee.”

Bugkalot Coffee partners with indigenous communities in the Sierra Madre mountains.

“From a community development perspective, you work with the local community to see what resources they have, and you start from there,” Mr. Tanchi said.

“Given that the Bugkalot community lies deep within the Sierra Madre mountains, and also that there are some natural geographic and logistical constraints, coffee makes sense,” he added.

“We are fully invested in the community because we have other, non-monetary goals,” he said, citing a revenue-sharing model that gives growers “a bigger piece of the pie (and ensures that they) are not just a cog in the supply chain,” he added.

Mr. Tanchi said growing conditions are favorable for the business — altitude is good for Arabica coffee, the company’s main product, and water is sufficient year-round.

“However, the natural soil composition is not the most fertile, requiring some intervention to improve it,” he said.

The business was hit hard by Typhoon Man-yi (Pepito), which caused agriculture losses worth over P260 million and inflicted damage to infrastructure.



“We continuously still struggle with raising funds for operations and for improvements or enhancements. One of the drawbacks of our centralized operation is that all the responsibility for operational expenses falls on us,” Mr. Tanchi said.

Asked about the state of the recovery process, he said “We just deal with it and keep moving forward as best as we can.”

Mr. Tanchi said the company has been planting a newer variety of Arabica, which he said is “higher-yielding” and would “help us increase production over the next few years.”

The company has been implementing “more and more” organic farming principles every year, with the plantation itself contributing “to greening and tree-planting and also prevents further slash-and-burn farming anywhere there are coffee trees.”

“As we bring in new organic farming technology, the farmers also see that and can adopt that as well,” Mr. Tanchi said.

He said the business has been using organic fertilizer for several years now and just recently visited a fully organic farming site “to learn even more.”

While the company is not yet fully organic, “we definitely aim to be one as much as we can.”

“We will continue what we’ve been doing, adding infrastructure as and when able, continue our expansion, maintain our quality and keep working towards more production at same or better quality,” Mr. Tanchi said.

“In parallel, we have been working on our cafe, and that should provide us higher margins and an additional distribution venue for Bugkalot Coffee.”

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/02/17/653561/bugkalot-coffee-on-the-road-to-recovery-from-typhoon/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Vietnam open to boosting US farm imports as tariff risks rise

February 17, 2025 | 12:02 am



**REUTERS**

HANOI — Vietnam stands ready to import more farm products from the US, according to a statement from Trade minister Nguyen Hong Dien Friday, a day after US President Donald Trump said he would start imposing global reciprocal tariffs.

Vietnam, home to manufacturing operations of multinationals including Apple and Samsung, could be hit hard by any new tariffs. Last year, it posted a record \$123.5-billion trade surplus with the US, the largest after China, the European Union and Mexico.

“Vietnam is ready to open its market and increase imports of agricultural products from the United States,” Mr. Dien told US Ambassador to Vietnam Marc Knapper at a meeting last week, the Vietnamese government said. More than one-fourth of US exports to Vietnam last year were agricultural products, mostly cotton, soybeans and tree nuts, for a total value of \$3.4 billion, according to US government data.

A White House official, who spoke to reporters before Mr. Trump ordered his team to devise a plan on reciprocal tariffs, said the administration would study countries with the biggest trade surpluses and highest tariffs first. Among top US trading partners, Vietnam is one of the countries with the largest tariff gaps, charging higher import duties than those applied by the US.

Vietnam imposes average import duties of 9.4%, according to the World Trade Organization.

Last week, the government of Vietnam, whose largest market is the United States, set up a working group to address any rising risks from trade tensions.

Mr. Trump has not explicitly mentioned Vietnam as a trade target, but new 25% tariffs imposed this week by the US on steel and aluminium have already hit the Southeast Asian nation.

Many of Vietnam’s steel exports to the US, however, had already faced 25% duties, making that blow less heavy than on other exporters, one industry official said.

For Vietnamese aluminum, pre-existing US tariffs had been at 10%, Do Ngoc Hung, Vietnam's trade representative in the US, told Vietnamese state media.

To reduce the trade surplus, Vietnamese officials have discussed with the Trump administration the possible purchase of US liquefied natural gas, multiple officials said.

Vietnamese budget carrier VietJet has also agreed to buy 200 Boeing 737 MAX jets in a multi-billion dollar deal first signed in 2016 and revised afterwards. No plane has yet been delivered although the company had said it expected to receive the first jets last year.

Vietnam has also been in talks to buy Lockheed Martin C-130 Hercules military transport planes, officials have said.

The Trump Organization has also agreed to develop a \$1.5-billion golf course in Vietnam, its local partner said in October. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/02/17/653560/vietnam-open-to-boosting-us-farm-imports-as-tariff-risks-rise/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Brazil agriculture agency plans long-term research into cannabis cultivation

February 13, 2025 | 11:25 am



**REUTERS**

SAO PAULO – Brazil’s agricultural research agency Embrapa, which helped turn the country into a leading grains exporter, is preparing a 12-year research program that could do the same for cannabis cultivation in the farming powerhouse.

Embrapa scientists, who bred genetic varieties of grains, cotton and vegetables best suited for Brazil’s tropical climate, expect health agency Anvisa to give a green light this year for the cannabis research program.

“Can you imagine if we had already carried out the genetic improvement of this plant like we’ve done with cotton in the last 50 years?” said Daniela Bittencourt, a researcher with the cannabis work group at Embrapa.

Embrapa’s plans include creating a cannabis seed bank and adapting varieties to the Brazilian soil and climate, while helping to identify and develop regional cannabis production hubs around the country, she said.

Bittencourt said about ten domestic and international companies have already contacted Embrapa about cannabis research partnerships. The firms are interested in applications ranging from medicine to food products, as well as exploring traits to facilitate crop rotation or fix carbon in soil.

Similar efforts by Embrapa since the 1970s opened up vast regions of Brazil for productive soybean farming, for example, kicking off a ten-fold increase in Brazil’s soy output to make it the world’s largest producer.

A Brazilian higher court ruling in November legalized planting of a type of cannabis known as hemp for medicinal purposes, giving Anvisa until May to establish regulations.

Another court hearing on Wednesday denied Anvisa’s request to extend that deadline by six months. The health agency did not comment immediately on the decision.

Recreational marijuana sale remains illegal in Brazil, unlike trailblazers such as Uruguay and Canada in the Western Hemisphere, which have encouraged domestic cannabis industries.

For now, November’s court ruling opened the door in Brazil to planting hemp, a version of cannabis with less than 0.3% of the psychoactive compound THC. The variety is often cultivated for cannabidiol (CBD), used for medical purposes, and its fibers, which have various industrial applications.

Kiara Cardoso, founder of DNA Solucoes em Biotecnologia, which won the court case allowing it and other interested firms to apply for a planting permit, said she eventually expects large-scale hemp production in Brazil to supply the paper, textile and food industries.

For the moment, she said, planting rules may restrict cultivation to small, indoor spaces that meet rigorous protocols for pharmaceutical supply chains.

China, Brazil's biggest trading partner, is the world's largest producer and exporter of hemp, according to academic research. Countries such as France and Paraguay have also authorized cultivation for industrial and medicinal purposes. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/02/13/653053/brazil-agriculture-agency-plans-long-term-research-into-cannabis-cultivation/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Malaysia cracks down on cooking oil export fraud

February 17, 2025 | 12:01 am



**REUTERS**

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia will crack down on fraud in the used cooking oil industry, its Deputy Commodities minister told Reuters, as western governments investigate whether shipments of the biofuel feedstock from Asia actually contain virgin oil.

The Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) is reviewing its standards and policies governing used cooking oil (UCO) and palm industry waste known as sludge palm oil (SPO) to better distinguish them in order to prevent discrepancies in exports, Deputy Plantation and Commodities Minister Chan Foong Hin said.

“The government is also strengthening enforcement mechanisms to uphold industry credibility and Malaysia’s reputation as a responsible exporter,” he said in an interview Thursday, adding that complaints from buyers could endanger the country’s status as a credible UCO exporter.

He said ensuring that the entire supply chain is traceable would combat fraudulent practices.

“Basically the center of this issue is the traceability. How do you make the whole supply chain traceable?” Mr. Chan said.

The European biodiesel industry last year complained of a surge in imports from China it believes involve supplies declared as made with recycled oil and fat but actually produced with cheaper and less sustainable virgin oil.

Neighboring Indonesia, the world’s biggest palm oil producer, last month moved to curb exports of UCO and palm oil residue, saying that shipments in recent years had exceeded production capacity, indicating virgin crude palm oil (CPO) had been mixed in.

In August, the US Environmental Protection Agency said it launched investigations into the supply chains of at least two renewable fuel producers, without naming the companies, amid industry concerns that some may be using fraudulent biodiesel feedstocks to secure lucrative government subsidies.

Malaysia’s palm industry, the world’s second-largest, should not view the EU’s looming deforestation regulation negatively as the country is committed to anti-deforestation, Mr. Chan said.

About 87% of Malaysia’s palm oil plantations are sustainably certified through the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) standards, Mr. Chan said.

“In fact, we are ready,” he said.

In December, the EU approved a one-year delay to the landmark deforestation law requiring importers of soy, beef, cocoa, coffee, palm oil, timber, rubber and related products to prove their supply chains do not contribute to the destruction of the world’s forests, or face hefty fines.

Chan downplayed a downturn in shipments to top palm oil buyer India, which hit a 14-year low in January, as a “short term” situation given the demand needs of its 1.45 billion population.

India imported 3.03 million metric tons of Malaysian palm oil in 2024, up 6.5%.

“The permanent factor is the population. So yes, we are still optimistic,” Chan said. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/02/17/653559/malaysia-cracks-down-on-cooking-oil-export-fraud/>

**MANILA STANDARD:**

# Thousands of unmilled palay stored in NFA warehouses

By Manila Standard

February 17, 2025, 12:25 am

National Food Authority (NFA) warehouses in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro are reportedly holding hundreds of thousands of sacks of unmilled palay, some of which have been stored for up to two years, even as the Department of Agriculture has declared a food security emergency due to high rice prices.

Gemma Tabian, a rice farmer, said that farmers are struggling to find buyers for their newly harvested rice because NFA warehouses are already full. She told ABS-CBN that some palay has rotted or been sold at drastically reduced prices, forcing some farmers to keep their harvest for personal consumption.

The Manila Standard has reached out to the DA for comment but received no response as of press time.

NFA San Jose Branch Manager Elimar Regindin acknowledged the large stockpile, confirming 612,000 sacks of palay in storage, though he claimed only 10,000 sacks are two years old, with the majority being around six months old.

He stated that the NFA milled 73,000 bags of rice last year, suggesting much of the stored palay has already been processed. Regindin also denied reports of rotting palay, citing regular inspections.

The primary obstacle to processing the stored palay appears to be a lack of milling contracts. Regindin explained that the mandated 63% guaranteed milling recovery (GMR) rate, coupled with low rice bran prices due to the African Swine Fever pandemic, makes the deals unprofitable for millers.

He stated that they have been bidding out milling contracts, but have received no bids. Vice Governor Diana Apigo-Tayag has appealed to local millers to participate in future bidding rounds. Regindin, who has been branch manager for less than three months, is investigating why the palay was left unmilled in the first place. He warned that if no millers come forward, there will be no space to store the upcoming harvest, as the current NFA storage capacity is only a little over 141,000 sacks.

The situation leaves local farmers in a precarious position and threatens to exacerbate the existing food security issues.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/314558564/thousands-of-unmilled-palay-stored-in-nfa-warehouses.html>



**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# **Rice, vegetable prices going down – DA chief**

**By Giselle P. Jordan**

**February 17, 2025**

THE prices of rice and vegetables have gone down, officials of the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and Quezon City local government said following a joint inspection at the Commonwealth Public Market.

Rice was being sold "at maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) guidelines at P55, P54, P45, P42, and P40. This is a good sign. For tomatoes, one stall was selling at P30 per kilogram (kg), the highest at P50," DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

Since last month, the DA has been imposing an MSRP for imported rice — from P58/kg on Jan. 20, P55/kg on Feb. 5, and P52/kg on Feb. 15.

Kadiwa ng Pangulo kiosks have also lowered the prices of their rice stocks, with 5 percent broken rice (RFA5) at P43/kg, 25 percent (RFA25) at P35/kg, and 100 percent at P33/kg.

Broken rice is composed of rice grains fragmented during drying or milling. It is said to be equally nutritious as regular rice, and much cheaper.

Meanwhile, Tiu Laurel said the DA and the Quezon City LGU will go over the details of the city's purchase of National Food Authority's (NFA) rice stocks.

"In our initial town hall meeting, we agreed the NFA rice could be directly supplied to our rice sellers. The NFA will explain this to the rice vendors, making it more efficient," said Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte.

## **Pork remains expensive**

As for other commodities, Tiu Laurel said that while chicken prices have gone down, pork remains expensive. He said an MSRP for pork might be imposed in March.

"I've received initial reports that the problem lies in the retail sector. However, in my conversation with a vendor at Commonwealth Market, she said the issue is with the agents, middlemen, farmgate prices, and slaughterhouses," Tiu Laurel said.

He noted that while prices of onion have slightly increased, the DA's importation plan will address the problem.

"We urge our farmers and traders that the early harvest of onions should be sent directly to the market and not stored. Storing them will prevent prices from dropping," said Tiu Laurel.

For her part, Trade Secretary Cristina Roque said: "DTI will closely monitor the prices set by the DA for rice to ensure compliance, as we have regional and provincial directors in all 18 regions across the country. This is part of our efforts to enforce price regulations for other products as well."

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/17/business/top-business/rice-vegetable-prices-going-down-da-chief/2056611>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# **DA, Denso PH partner for agriculture innovation**

**By Giselle P. Jordan**

**February 17, 2025**

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) and auto components manufacturer Denso Philippines have formalized a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to integrate modern education and technology into the high-value crops sector.

Denso has notably joined the food industry.

DA Undersecretary for High-Value Crops Cheryl Marie Natividad-Caballero and Denso PH president Yuji Torii signed the agreement, stressing the importance of collaboration in advancing agricultural innovation for improved productivity and food security.

The deal will give DA personnel and other learners access to Denso's hydroponic Smart AgriTech Farm in Ibaan, Batangas. The participants will have educational tours and undergo training on best practices in innovative farming. Denso will also assist the DA in replicating standardized farming methods and technologies at DA's research facilities.

In turn, the DA will open its research facilities for demonstrations, assign a focal person for project coordination and monitoring, and oversee the participants' progress through its Agricultural Training Institute (ATI).

As a whole, the collaboration is about the exchange of valuable information, education, and communication materials on farming production. It will likewise forge connections with other initiatives of the DA for the adoption of technology and replication of projects.

"This partnership directly supports the DA-High Value Crops Development Program's (DA-HVCDP) objective of expanding economic growth for Philippine crops. It also aligns with Denso PH's philosophy of contributing to a better world by creating value together with a vision for the future," said Caballero.

"We will continue to develop and enhance [these programs] for the future, especially to improve the Philippines' food security," Torii stressed.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/17/business/top-business/da-denso-ph-partner-for-agriculture-innovation/2056608>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Rice is life

*GRAMMARAMA!*

**By Alvin Santos**

**February 17, 2025**



ONE thing about me is I love my rice! I'm that friend who eats rice for breakfast, lunch and dinner and in between. Yes, I could eat rice all day, even for merienda and midnight snack! I can't get more Pinoy than that. I love the porous kind that doesn't stick together like glue. When it comes to rice, staying united isn't necessarily a good thing, at least for me. I also love fried rice in almost everything, even sinigang! If you haven't tried this, thank me later! I would say one of my specialties is fried rice.

You wanna know the secret to good fried rice? It is to make sure to cook it cold and straight out of the fridge after making it sit in there overnight. Besides of course, putting in lots and lots of garlic! Or there's always Tropical Hut, which serves one of the best fried rice in town. Trust me! By the way, we usually place a comma after "of course" when it is used at the beginning of a sentence. Talk to you tomorrow!

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/17/opinion/columns/rice-is-life/2056619>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# **Pangilinan promises to bust rice cartels**

**By Bernadette E. Tamayo**  
**February 17, 2025**

RETURNING senator Francis Pangilinan stressed the need to crack down on cartels that were pushing up the market price of rice.

Pangilinan made the remark after he joined Sen. Risa Hontiveros in inspecting the prices of rice and other goods at Muñoz Market in Quezon City.

"There is really a need to dismantle these abusive groups that keep the price of rice high," he said in Filipino.

Pangilinan reiterated his commitment to finding solutions to bring down prices of rice and other goods if he regains a Senate seat in the May elections.

He said a decisive, no-nonsense crackdown on profiteers is key to addressing rice price hikes.

angilinan noted that as food security secretary of the late President Benigno Aquino III from June 2014 to September 2015, he helped bring down the price of rice.

"We were able to do that before. We ran after the unscrupulous traders. We fixed the importation process. We rejected the purchase of Vietnam and Thai rice at high costs," he said.

Within one year, Pangilinan said they brought down rice prices by as much as P3 per kilo and reduced rice inflation from 15 percent to 0.8 percent.

This also resulted in the lowest nationwide inflation rate in 20 years, he said.

Pangilinan noted that some stalls at Muñoz Market were selling Pakistani and Myanmar rice at P40 and P45 per kilo, cheaper than the Thai and Vietnamese rice imported by the government at P50 to P55 per kilo.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/17/news/national/pangilinan-promises-to-bust-rice-cartels/2056638>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# **Rice hoarders' arrest in Bocaue lauded**

**By Red Mendoza**

**February 17, 2025**

THE Agricultural Sector Alliance of the Philippines (AGAP) Party-list has lauded the arrest and filing of charges against four individuals who were caught during a raid made by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) on a warehouse of rice in Bocaue, Bulacan on Feb. 10.

In a statement, AGAP Party-list Rep. Nicanor Briones said that the owners of the warehouse should also be charged under Republic Act 12022 or the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, which carries life imprisonment and carries no bail.

He said that it is not enough that the warehouse manager, two cashiers, and inventory officer of the warehouse will be charged with hoarding, adulteration, profiteering, untruthful labeling, and economic sabotage.

The registered owner of the warehouse, according to the NBI and DA, is a Filipino named Elizabeth Pineda who remains at large.

Briones said that he is glad that those who raided the warehouse are now part of the enforcement group, which is investigating and inspecting warehouses that may be involved in exploiting consumers.

He stressed that due to the exploitation of consumers, the price of rice continues to be high, which should have dropped by P14 per kilo due to the 20-percent reduction in the tariff and the decrease in the world market price of \$400.

"It is only right to inspect all warehouses that may be hoarding and hiding rice, that is why its price does not decrease," Briones added.

Briones also pushed the implementation of a maximum suggested retail price on imported pork before local pork, which could pull down the price of local pork.

This way, Briones said, local hog raisers who suffered losses due to the African swine fever (ASF) will be able to recover.

Meanwhile, AGRI Party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee has called on the DA to implement the food security emergency for a maximum of three months only, while pushing the purchase of rice from local farmers to replenish the National Food Authority's buffer stock.

Lee said that the declaration of a national food emergency should only be a "short term solution."

"The government should buy the palay of local farmers in prices that will ensure their revenue and would convince them to increase their production that would decrease the prices in the market," Lee said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/17/regions/rice-hoarders-arrest-in-bocaue-lauded/2056594>

# **PCA: Swiss firm keen on building cocoboard plant in PHL**

Ada Pelonia

February 17, 2025

The Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) and a Swiss firm discussed the potential establishment of a coconut husk-based medium-density fiberboard (MDF) manufacturing plant in the country. The PCA said Swiss firm Naturloop AG manufactures cocoboard, a hundred-percent bio-based MDF made from coconut husks, an abundant byproduct of the Philippine coconut industry. Currently, the company sources husks from the Philippines and is working with local cooperatives and businesses to strengthen its supply chain.

PCA Administrator and CEO Dexter R. Buted met with Naturloop CEO Daniel Dinizo to discuss the project, focusing on the potential for local production to reduce costs and improve supply chain efficiency.

The agency said in a statement that cocoboard is promoted as termite-resistant, formaldehyde-free, and moisture-resistant, which offers a cost-competitive alternative to traditional wood-based panels.

“With the Philippines requiring an estimated 800,000 cubic meters of board panels annually, and local production only meeting 150,000 cubic meters, the market opportunity is substantial.”

According to PCA, Naturloop has been working to establish a stable husk supply chain in the Philippines since a 2020 study in Quezon province. However, a previous attempt to set up a shared processing facility faced logistical hurdles.

Despite this, the company continues to work with local suppliers like Prosource Manufacturing Inc. and the Quezon Federation and Union of Cooperatives.

“As global demand for sustainable building materials increases, the said manufacturing plant could offer significant economic, employment, and environmental benefits.”

The PCA said that it would continue further discussions with Naturloop regarding investment incentives, infrastructure support, and the long-term feasibility of local production. It added that meetings with stakeholders are also expected in the coming months.

Meanwhile, the agency noted that it has long advocated for initiatives that add value to the coconut supply chain, including featuring the cocoboard project at its 2021 Coconut Investment Forum.

It added facilitating discussions between private investors and government agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture’s Public-Private Partnership Unit and the Philippine Rural Development Program (PRDP), to explore funding options.

The Philippines is one of the leading coconut-producing countries worldwide. The tropical fruit is also among the country’s top agricultural export commodities.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/17/pca-swiss-firm-keen-on-building-cocoboard-plant-in-phl/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **Bukidnon is top contributor to farm output– PSA**

Bless Aubrey Ogerio  
February 17, 2025

Bukidnon is the top contributor to the country's agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector, latest figures from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed.

The province recorded a 7.1 percent share in the national gross value added (GVA) in 2023, it was followed by Nueva Ecija with a 4.6 percent share and Pangasinan at 3.8 percent.

Also making it to the top 10 are Pampanga (3.7 percent), Isabela (3.3 percent), Negros Occidental (3.1 percent), Davao del Norte (2.8 percent), Batangas (2.8 percent), Iloilo (2.7 percent) and Quezon (2.5 percent).

The agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector's total GVA in 2023 reached P1.80 trillion, reflecting a 1.2 percent increase from P1.78 trillion in 2022. Collectively, the top 10 provinces accounted for around 36.5 percent of this total.

Rizal recorded the fastest growth at 19.9 percent, followed by Negros Oriental at 15.8 percent and Batanes at 14.7 percent.

Agriculture, forestry, and fishing remained the largest economic driver in 39 provinces. Maguindanao del Sur had the highest share at 53.4 percent, followed closely by Sulu (53.2 percent) and Bukidnon (49.8 percent).

The PSA has now rolled out the compilation of provincial product accounts (PPA) across all regions, aiming to provide a clearer economic snapshot at the local level.

By 2025, the PSA said that the PPA system is set to be fully institutionalized, ensuring annual tracking of economic performance in all provinces and highly urbanized cities.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/17/bukidnon-is-top-contributor-to-farm-output-psa/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **Volume of fish unloaded in ports up in January**

Ada Pelonia

February 17, 2025

Many of the country's regional ports registered higher fish unloading volumes in January, the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) reported.

Figures from the PFDA showed that regional fish ports (RFPs) delivered a total of 39,399.10 metric tons (MT) to consumers last month. This was 1.6 percent higher than the 38,780.63 MT recorded in the same period last year.

The government-owned and -controlled corporation (GOCC) said Navotas Fish Port Complex registered the highest unloading volume in January at 19,120.85 MT. This was 80.28 percent higher than the 10,606 MT of fish products distributed to consumers in the same period last year.

It added that the Bulan Fish Port Complex registered a 4.2 percent growth to 1,126.55 MT from 1,080.95 MT in January 2024.

Meanwhile, the PFDA said the Davao Fish Port Complex also posted an increase in fish delivered to consumers last month at 459.47 MT, 66.39 percent higher than the 276.14 MT in the previous year.

In contrast, the GOCC said General Santos Fish Port Complex experienced a setback in fish unloading as volume fell by 33.34 percent to 15,161.366 MT from last year's 22,706.98 MT.

The PFDA added that fish unloaded in Lucena Fish Port Complex also declined by 3.24 percent to 1,592.37 MT last month from 1,645.61 MT in the same period of the previous year.

For the country's sole Visayas port, the agency said fish unloaded in the Iloilo Port Complex shrank by 0.95 percent to 1,591.91 MT from 1,607.20 MT.

The western Mindanao port, Zamboanga Fish Port Complex, saw a decline in fish unloading at 346.47 MT from 857.75 MT recorded in the previous year.

The GOCC attached to the Department of Agriculture noted that Camaligan Fish Port supplied clients with 0.125 MT of fish and fishery products.

The country recently concluded its three-month closed fishing season that started on November 1 in the waters northeast of Palawan and from November 15 in the Visayan Seas and Zamboanga Peninsula.

All three areas are considered spawning grounds for small pelagic fishes like sardines and mackerel.

Meanwhile, PFDA recently reported that fish unloaded in the country's regional ports shrank by 12.09 percent year-on-year in the fourth quarter of 2024.

In its quarterly bulletin, the agency said RFPs delivered 126,903.94 MT to consumers in October to December. This was lower than the 144,359.40 MT recorded in the same period of 2023.

The PFDA said the landed catch during the three-month period was equivalent to an average daily unloading of 1,379.39 MT.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/17/volume-of-fish-unloaded-in-ports-up-in-january/>



**BUSINESS MIRROR”**

# Manila sets sights on loan from France for dairy project

Ada Pelonia

February 17, 2025

The National Dairy Authority (NDA) forged an agreement with a France-based consultancy firm to conduct a feasibility study for a project that aims to boost the country’s milk production.

The attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA) partnered with Phylum SARL to assess whether the Philippine Dairy Project qualifies for a concessional loan from the French government.

Under the project, the NDA intends to establish a modern dairy farm in Ubay, Bohol, with the capacity to care for over 300 cows for milk production. This would also include a facility capable of processing up to 10 metric tons (MT) of raw milk daily.

The project also includes collaboration with local cooperatives for milk and fodder production, along with capacity-building efforts to enhance training and advisory services. It calls for the setup of milk collection centers and milk processing facilities in selected areas nationwide.

The agency said the feasibility study will be funded through a grant from the French government’s Fonds d’Etudes et d’Aide au Secteur Prive (FASEP).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., representing the NDA, signed the memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Phylum, represented by Managing Partner, Francois Gary.

The French Ambassador Marie Fontanel, the Undersecretary for Special Concerns, Mr. Jerome V. Oliveros, and NDA Administrator Marcus Antonius T. Andaya witnessed the signing ceremony.

Through the MOU, the agency aims to strengthen French-Philippine relations in the dairy sector and modernize the country’s dairy industry.

The NDA said it welcomes international collaborations and private-sector investments to bolster the country’s local dairy industry.

Currently, the country’s milk sufficiency stands at 1.66 percent, with NDA targeting to reach 5 percent or 80 million liters of milk by 2028.

The agency said the country’s average milk production per cow remains low at 8 liters per day, hindered by poor feed and management practices, high production costs, and insufficient dairy infrastructure.

Earlier, the NDA said it is seeking more funds to increase the country’s milk output and enable local producers to meet at least 5 percent of the Philippines’s milk requirement. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/10/21/nda-needs-bigger-budget-to-hike-milk-output/>)

The agency said improving the country’s milk self-sufficiency rate will entail significant investments.

“Sans an increase in the budget of the NDA, it will be highly impossible to achieve the 5 percent milk sufficiency by 2028.”

NDA stands to receive P537 million under the 2025 National Expenditure Program (NEP), slightly higher than its 2024 budget of P522 million.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/17/manila-sets-sights-on-loan-from-france-for-dairy-project/>

**ABANTE TONITE:**

# **Taas-presyo ng kape nakaamba dahil sa higpit ng global supply**

**February 16, 2025**

Heads up sa mga coffee lover!

Inanunsiyo ng Philippine Coffee Board (PCB) ang posibleng pagtaas ng presyo ng kape.

Ayon kay PCB president at co-chair Pacita Juan, maaaring tumaas ng humigit-kumulang 20 porsiyento ang presyo ng kape dahil sa mahigpit na global supply at mas mataas na halaga.

Ngunit makikinabang umano rito ang mga magsasaka kung makakagawa rin sila ng magandang kalidad ng coffee beans.

Aniya, ang farm-gate price ng robusta, ang pinaka pinoprodyus na uri ng kape, ay dumoble sa P350 kada kilo mula sa P180 samantalang pumalo naman sa P320 per kilogram ang commercial-grade coffee.

Base naman sa inilabas ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) na suggested retail price o SRP ng kape noong nakaraang buwan, ang 25-gram coffee refill ng Blend 45 ay tumaas ng mahigit P2, mula sa P18.50 ay naging P20.25.

Ang 25-gram naman ng Great Taste premium coffee at 50-gram Great Taste premium coffee ay naglaro sa P21.60 at P42.20, ayon sa pagkakasunod.

Samantala, ang bagong SRP para sa 26-gram ng Nescafe Original ay itinakda sa P7.75.

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/02/16/taas-presyo-ng-kape-nakaamba-dahil-sa-higpit-ng-global-supply/>

**ABANTE TONITE:**

# **Romualdez pinalalakas pa batas laban sa agricultural smuggling**

**February 16, 2025**

Saludo si Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez sa Bureau of Customs (BOC) na nagresulta sa pagkakasamsam ng ₱85.1 bilyong halaga ng kontrabando at ang matagumpay na pagsasagawa ng mahigit 2,100 anti-smuggling operations noong 2024.

Habang kinikilala ang mga mahahalagang tagumpay ng BOC, muling iginiit ni Speaker Romualdez ang agarang pangangailangan na palakasin pa ang pagpapatupad ng batas laban sa agricultural smuggling, na patuloy na banta sa mga lokal na magsasaka at sa seguridad sa pagkain.

“Maganda ang ginagawa ng Customs sa paglaban sa smuggling, pero hindi tayo dapat huminto. Kailangang mas paigtingin ang kampanya lalo na laban sa agricultural smuggling na sumisira sa kabuhayan ng ating mga magsasaka at nagpapahirap sa taumbayan,” diin ni Romualdez.

Ipinunto rin ng Speaker ang nakakabahalang mga ulat tungkol sa malalaking buldo ng bigas na naiwan sa mga pantalan at ang pagtatambak ng mga imported na frozen chicken, na nagpapalakas ng hinala na may nagaganap na manipulasyon sa suplay.

Binigyang-diin niya na ang ganitong imoral at ilegal na gawain ay nagpapahirap sa mga magsasaka at mamimili, nilalabag ang patas na presyo, at inilalagay sa panganib ang seguridad sa pagkain ng bansa.

“Huwag nating hayaang magamit ang smuggling at hoarding bilang sandata laban sa ating ekonomiya. Dapat supilin ang mga sindikato at tiyakin na ang pagkain ay abot-kaya ng bawat Pilipino,” ani Romualdez. Nanawagan si Romualdez ng mas mahigpit na kontrol sa mga hangganan, mas matibay na koordinasyon sa pagitan ng mga ahensya ng gobyerno, at mas mabilis na pagsasampa ng kaso laban sa mga smuggler upang mabuwag ang kanilang mga operasyon. Binanggit niya na ang smuggling ay hindi lamang isang problemang pang-ekonomiya kundi isang direktang pag-atake sa mga magsasaka, mamimili, at sa katatagan ng bansa.

“Hindi pwedeng basta hulihin lang ang mga puslit na produkto. Kailangang wasakin ang buong sindikato ng smuggling. Hindi lang ito laban ng Customs—laban ito ng buong gobyerno para sa taumbayan,” iginiit niya.

Habang kinikilala ang tagumpay ng Customs sa pagharang ng mga ilegal na kargamento, hinimok ni Romualdez ang mga awtoridad na tugunan ang mga sistematikong kahinaan na nagpapahintulot sa pagpasok ng mga puslit na produkto sa bansa.

Kabilang sa kanyang mungkahi ang paggamit ng advanced monitoring technology, mas mahigpit na pagsubaybay sa mga agricultural import, at agarang aksyon laban sa mga nagpapadali ng smuggling, maging sa pribado o pampublikong sektor.

Higit pa sa pagpapatupad ng batas, binigyang-diin ni Romualdez ang pangangailangan ng mga pananggalang ng gobyerno laban sa manipulasyon ng presyo upang matiyak ang patas na kalagayan ng pamilihan para sa mga magsasaka at mamimili. Muling pinagtibay niya ang pangako ng Mababang Kapulungan ng Kongreso sa pagsuporta sa mga panukalang batas na magpapalakas sa kakayahan ng Customs sa pagpapatupad ng batas at magpapatatag sa presyo ng pagkain.

“Ang laban sa smuggling ay hindi lang tungkol sa pagsamsam ng puslit na produkto. Ito ay tungkol sa pagprotekta sa kabuhayan ng ating mga magsasaka at sa kapakanan ng bawat Pilipino. Kailangang ipakita ng gobyerno na seryoso tayo sa pagsupil sa mga nagsasamantala,” aniya.

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/02/16/romualdez-pinalalakas-pa-batas-laban-sa-agricultural-smuggling/>

**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:**

# Romualdez pinuri anti-smuggling ops ng Customs

Joy Cantos

February 17, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Pinuri ni Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez ang Bureau of Customs (BOC) sa pinaigting nitong kampanya laban sa smuggling na nagresulta sa pagkakasamsam ng ₱85.1 bilyong halaga ng kontrabando at ang matagumpay na pagsasagawa ng mahigit 2,100 anti-smuggling operations noong 2024.

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Anya, ang ganitong imoral at iligal na gawain ay nagpapahirap sa mga magsasaka at mamimili, nilalabag ang patas na presyo, at inilalagay sa panganib ang seguridad sa pagkain ng bansa.

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<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2025/02/17/2422077/romualdez-pinuri-anti-smuggling-ops-ng-customs>