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MANILA BULLETIN:

DA urges infra overhaul to combat high food prices, reduce spoilage

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Feb 17, 2025 02:37 PM

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is seeking the improvement of the country's road and bridge infrastructure to ensure the smooth flow of agricultural products to markets, making prices of goods stable for consumers.

In a statement on Monday, Feb. 17, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said he will raise this concern in an upcoming dialogue with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

"The importance of a strong road and bridge network in agriculture, especially in an archipelago like the Philippines, cannot be overstated," said Laurel.

"Agriculture relies heavily on logistics, and transport infrastructure directly affects the cost and efficiency of moving farm inputs and produce," he stressed.

The DA chief noted that well-maintained roads and bridges could help lower transportation costs, reduce spoilage, and allow farmers to bring their goods to the market faster.

Amid recent surges in various agricultural goods, an improved infrastructure would bring in more stable prices for consumers, he said.

Rice, according to Laurel, is a particular commodity that bear the brunt of poor roads and bridges across the country.

He said these substandard conditions are forcing Filipino farmers and traders to overload their trucks to cut costs—in return, further damaging the already inferior infrastructure.

This practice of loading beyond the prescribed limit has led to the collapse of several bridges in Luzon and Visayas in recent years.

This is in contrast with Thailand and Vietnam, which have lower transportation costs due to better road conditions.

Laurel said trucks in these neighboring countries can carry up to eight to ten tons, which is more than the 41-ton limit in the Philippines.

"Better infrastructure enables a more efficient supply chain, reducing costs from farm to market," he added. The Agriculture chief said without addressing the inadequate road networks and overloading, the practice of overloading trucks will persist.

"Investing in transport infrastructure is not just a necessity—it is vital for national growth and prosperity," said Laurel.

The planned meeting between the DA and the DPWH aims to identify key areas for road and bridge upgrades, especially in major agricultural regions.

During his third State of the Nation Address (SONA) last year, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. committed to reduce "unnecessary business costs" in the agriculture sector such as through the construction of more farm-to-market roads.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/17/da-eyes-better-infrastructure-to-boost-agricultural-sector>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA backs proposed P380/kilo max SRP on pork

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

February 18, 2025 | 12:00am



A vendor sells pork products at a market in Pasay City.

STAR / Ryan Baldemor

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is open to enforce a maximum suggested retail price (SRP) of P380 per kilo of pork as suggested by a farmers' group.

At a press briefing yesterday, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said that officials of the DA are scheduled to meet this week to finalize a pork max SRP.

“There are initial findings and those (findings) will be discussed this week as there will be consultation to be held,” De Mesa said.

The retail price of pork remains high at P480 per kilo. “By March, most likely, we will be able to issue maximum SRP on pork,” he added.

He said consultations would be held to discuss the position of stakeholders.

“The farmgate price of pork is not that high but there is a spike once the pork reaches the markets,” he noted.

Farmers' group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura executive director Jayson Cainglet said the pork max SRP should only be P380 per kilo.

“The secretary has been saying that if it exceeds P400 per kilo, that's profiteering already,” he said.

Based on monitoring by the DA, the retail price of pork shoulder ranged between P350 and P420 per kilo while that of pork belly is between P380 and PP480 per kilo.

Meanwhile, De Mesa also announced that imported onions have started arriving in the country, with the retail price of the bulbs likely to continue going down after reaching a high of P250 per kilo last week.

De Mesa said that of the approved 1,014 metric tons of white onions, 52 metric tons had already arrived.

“For onions, the prevailing price since Feb. 15 until yesterday was P200 per kilo. It went down,” De Mesa said.

De Mesa added that the DA has yet to receive a report on the arrival of 3,000 MT of onions approved for importation. But he maintained that the Feb. 20 deadline set by the DA would be observed.

“At least 44 SPSICs (sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance) equivalent to 2,222 MT of red onions were issued. We have yet to monitor any arrival,” he pointed out.

De Mesa said the entry of imported bulbs would not be allowed if the importers fail to meet the Feb. 20 deadline. “The arrival on or before Feb. 20 is a must,” he said.

“It (importation) will help the retail price to go down and will not increase and at the same time, will not dampen the farmgate price of locally produced onions,” De Mesa maintained.

He added that the imported onions should be delivered straight to the markets to prevent the importers from using as an excuse that the cold storage facilities were full to force the farmers to sell their produce at lower prices.

“Since the volume is limited, imported onions should be delivered straight to the markets,” he said.

Farmers’ groups have opposed the importation of onions as the harvest season has already started.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/18/2422275/da-backs-proposed-p380kilo-max-srp-pork>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Rice max SRP lowered; P49/kilo seen in March

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

February 18, 2025 | 12:00am



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

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — Authorities are expecting the maximum suggested retail price of rice to decline to P49 per kilo by March after the Department of Agriculture (DA) on Saturday enforced a max SRP of P52 per kilo.

A few violators of the max SRP have been recorded, the DA noted.

“There are retailers who still have old stocks, but these are limited. Many retailers complied, but the level of compliance is not yet high,” DA spokesman Arnel de Mesa said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. is committed to fulfilling his promise of bringing down retail rice prices, he noted.

Tiu Laurel issued a max SRP amid high rice prices despite a 20-percent tariff cut. A food security emergency has also been declared.

“We did not monitor P64 per kilo of five-percent broken rice. Most of the rice is sold at P55 to P62 per kilo, but these are special rice, not premium rice,” De Mesa noted.

Traders were given about two weeks to comply with the max SRP, he said.

De Mesa said the price trend of rice shows a continued decline in India, Thailand and Vietnam.

P35/kilo NFA rice

Meanwhile, about 67 local government units (LGUs) have signified their intent to sell NFA rice at P35 per kilo under the food security emergency, according to the National Food Authority.

“This week, we expect to start releasing NFA rice... Hopefully, more LGUs will participate,” NFA administrator Larry Lacson said.

The NFA can sell its rice stocks at P33 per kilo to mayors who can resell the staple at P35 per kilo, as per the food security emergency issued on Feb. 4 by Tiu Laurel.

Lacson said the NFA has around 812,000 bags of rice stock.

In Occidental Mindoro, he said there are at least 612,000 sacks of palay and 10,188 bags of rice stored in NFA warehouses.

A food security emergency has been declared as measures to reduce rice prices failed.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/18/2422293/rice-max-srp-lowered-p49kilo-seen-march>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA seeks legal review of profiteering

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

February 18, 2025 | 12:00am



Vendors attended to their customers buying various food items from their stalls inside the Commonwealth Market in Quezon City on November 22, 2024.

STAR / Miguel De Guzman

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is seeking to revise the definition of profiteering in existing laws in order to provide it with the power to curtail unscrupulous wholesalers and retailers of commodities in the market.

Agriculture officials said the department’s hands had been tied in addressing profiteering in the market, forcing it to be more creative in intervening and resolving the matter.

DA Undersecretary Asis Perez, in an earlier hearing conducted by the House of the Representatives, said the DA cannot just act on profiteering since its legal definition is quite different from its economic concept. Perez pointed out that for a situation to be considered profiteering, the price of the commodity must increase by 10 percent from its previous month’s average price in line with the definition stipulated under Republic Act 7581 or the Price Act. This, Perez emphasized, is quite different to what is happening to rice prices in the market.

“We are not talking about rice prices increasing but we are talking about prices not going down as expected,” he told the House committee.

“The law is worded differently so that we cannot just act on it,” he added.

House committee on agriculture and food chairperson Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga expressed openness to the issue raised by the DA, pointing out that there might be a need to “amend” the Price Act.

“We have to address this,” Enverga said.

Sources said the DA is now busy drafting multiple proposed amendments to existing legislations, including the Price Act, that would empower it to address market challenges like profiteering.

Under the Price Act, profiteering is defined as the sale of any commodity at a “price grossly in excess of its true worth.”

The law stipulates that a price of a commodity is “deemed grossly in excess of its true worth” if it has been raised by more than 10 percent in the immediately preceding month.

The issue of profiteering has been raised multiple times since President Marcos reduced the tariff on imported rice from 35 percent to 15 percent as prevailing retail prices remained elevated.

Various industry players claimed there is profiteering across the rice value chain that keeps retail prices of rice not going down as expected.

The average price of rice since July 2024 has been on a downward trend albeit at a turtle pace, based on Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data.

The average price of well-milled rice, for example, has been continuously declining from P55.85 per kilo in July last year to P54.14 per kilo in January, PSA data showed.

In fact, no less than Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. noted that there could be a possible profiteering in the sale of imported rice since some stocks were being sold earlier this year as high as P60 per kilo.

Tiu Laurel argued that based on the DA's computations that the price of imported rice should not hit that price level.

Because of this, the agriculture chief himself thinks the definition of profiteering under the law must be expanded. For imported rice, Tiu Laurel told The STAR that a profit margin higher than P10 across the value chain must be considered profiteering.

He explained that the retail price of imported rice in the market must be equivalent to its landed cost plus any pertinent taxes and a margin of P8 to P10 pesos spread across the value chain.

Citing consultations with industry players, Tiu Laurel said retailers are okay with a P4 to P5 per kilo margin while importers are okay with a P2 per kilo profit with the remaining profit of P3 to P4 per kilo going to traders.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/02/18/2422198/da-seeks-legal-review-profiteering>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA wants to talk with DPWH on farm-to-market roads, bridges' upgrades

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 07:12 AM February 18, 2025



A bridge in Mindanao serves as a lifeline for impoverished upland farmers. (File photo from ADB)

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is seeking an audience with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to ensure the smooth flow of agricultural goods and lower transport costs through improvements in infrastructure.

In a statement on Monday, the DA said the planned meeting aims to identify key areas for road and bridge upgrades, especially in major agricultural regions.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said improving roads and bridges will ultimately stabilize retail food prices, as it can decrease transportation costs, reduce spoilage and expedite the delivery of agricultural goods.

“Agriculture relies heavily on logistics, and transport infrastructure directly affects the cost and efficiency of moving farm inputs and produce,” the agriculture chief said.

“Better infrastructure enables a more efficient supply chain, reducing costs from farm to market,” he said.

The DA said this issue is especially critical in the rice sector, as transport costs in Thailand and Vietnam, among the country’s leading sources of imported rice, are lower due to better road conditions.

Tiu Laurel noted that trucks in both Southeast Asian countries are capable of transporting 8 to 10 tons more than the 41-ton limit in the Philippines.

Various costs are taken into account in producing agricultural products, such as farm inputs (seeds, fertilizers, feeds, etc.), fuel and oil, irrigation fees, electricity prices, labor and transport.

According to the DA, roads and bridges are damaged due to the practice of many Filipino farmers and traders of overloading their trucks to save on costs.

Despite regular bridge inspections and load rating updates mandated by the DPWH, the agency said some bridges, although rated for specific loads, have been pushed beyond their limits due to excessive overloading. “The practice of truckers of loading their vehicles with various even beyond prescribed limits has led to the collapse of several bridges across Luzon and the Visayas in recent years,” it said.

The DA stressed that such problems will persist if inadequate road networks and overloading issues will not be addressed.

<https://business.inquirer.net/506988/da-wants-to-talk-with-dpwh-on-farm-to-market-roads-bridges-upgrades>

BUSINESS WORLD:

2025 rice demand forecast set at 15 MMT

February 17, 2025 | 8:17 pm



BW FILE PHOTO

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Monday that it estimates rice demand for 2025 at over 15 million metric tons (MMT).

The rice harvest is expected to improve this year due to favorable growing conditions, Assistant Secretary Arnel V. de Mesa said on the sidelines of a briefing.

He said the El Niño and La Niña weather patterns significantly affected domestic rice output last year.

The DA said in November that the palay (unmilled rice) harvest for 2024 is estimated to come in at a four-year low of 19.41 MMT. The record was 20.06 MMT in 2023.

The positive outlook for rice in 2025 was also due to increased government intervention in irrigation and seed supply, Mr. De Mesa said.

The food industry is expected to account for 13.4 MMT of rice demand, Mr. De Mesa said.

At the briefing, Mr. De Mesa said 101,115.90 MT of imported rice arrived in February, with 61.54% released to the market. The total volume of rice to be landed this month is estimated at 154,692.04 MT.

In January, the Philippines imported 273,317.69 MT of rice.

Rice imports hit a record 4.68 MMT in 2024, against 3.6 MMT a year earlier.

Citing high rice costs, the DA has imposed a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) scheme for the grain and declared a food security emergency, which allows the government to release reserve stock to local government units (LGUs).

The DA, in an order dated Feb. 14, lowered the MSRP for imported rice with 5% broken-grain content to P52 per kilo.

Mr. De Mesa said the DA hopes to further bring down the MSRP to P49 per kilo in March.

He said the decline in rice prices is purely attributable to the MSRP since the NFA has yet to dispose of its stock.

The food security emergency authorizes the NFA to release 150,000 MT of its rice buffer stock to government agencies, LGUs, and government-subsidized Kadiwa outlets.

Mr. De Mesa said LGUs that have committed to buying NFA stock are mostly from Metro Manila.

The DA also reported that the price of well-milled rice fell to P35 per kilo on Monday from the prevailing price of P38 last week.

Of the imported varieties, the price of special white rice decreased to P55 per kilo from P58 last week.

The price of domestically grown premium (5% broken) rice declined to P50 per kilo from P55 per kilo last week.

— **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/02/17/653820/2025-rice-demand-forecast-set-at-15-mmt/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

DPWH to brief DA on farm infra progress

February 17, 2025 | 8:15 pm



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Monday that it will meet with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to be briefed on the progress of farm infrastructure projects.

“The planned discussions between DA and DPWH aim to pinpoint key areas for road and bridge upgrades, especially in major agricultural regions,” it said in a statement.

The DA noted that DPWH rules call for inspections and load rating updates, “but enforcement remains weak.”

“Without addressing inadequate road networks and overloading, the problem (of getting farm goods to consumers) will persist.”

“The importance of a strong road and bridge network in agriculture, especially in an archipelago like the Philippines, cannot be overstated,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. said.

“Agriculture relies heavily on logistics, and transport infrastructure directly affects the cost and efficiency of moving farm inputs and produce,” he added. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/02/17/653819/dpwh-to-brief-da-on-farm-infra-progress/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

P380 deemed fair price for pork MSRP coming in March

February 17, 2025 | 8:15 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/ MICHAEL VARCAS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Monday that it will implement a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for pork by March, adding that it considers P380 per kilo to be a fair price for producers and consumers.

At a briefing, DA Assistant Secretary Arnel V. de Mesa said it will adopt the pricing rules for rice to the pork MSRP.

“When we set the MSRP, retailers will follow and we will avoid profiteering or charging high prices,” he said. The DA is set to meet with the pork industry this week.

The assumptions underlying the MSRP scheme are a farmgate price of P250 per kilo and a “reasonable” margin that takes the retail price to P380, Mr. De Mesa said.

He cited previous remarks by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr., who took the position that anything above P400 is “unreasonable.”

The Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) told *BusinessWorld* that pork prices in Metro Manila often hit P400 per kilo, even with a P240-250 farmgate price.

“The price of pork should not go beyond P360-P380 per kilo,” SINAG spokesman Jay Cainglet said via Viber. Mr. De Mesa said about 30,000 hogs have been vaccinated against African Swine Fever (ASF).

The government began the controlled rollout of Vietnam-made ASF vaccines in late August, with a focus on hogs in Lobo, Batangas, which is one of the hotspots for the disease.

Former Agriculture Secretary William A. Dar told *BusinessWorld* earlier this month that weak supply is to blame for rising prices since the farmgate price remains low.

Mr. Laurel on Feb. 10 said the DA is “digging deep into the whole value chain of pork, and finding out whether or not there is profiteering.”

Mr. De Mesa said the DA is also considering selling below-market pork modeled on the government’s Rice for All program.

“We are also looking in the possibility that DA can also intervene,” he said.

At the briefing, the DA added that onion prices have fallen by as much as P40 per kilo.

Onion was selling for about P200 per kilo this week from P240 last week, Mr. De Mesa said.

“We expect that these will further decrease once (imported) yellow and red onions enter the markets,” he said.

The DA had approved onion imports of 4,000 MT after projecting a shortfall in supply of 7,000 MT. Applications to import thus far suggest import volumes of only 3,000 MT, according to Mr. De Mesa.

“Must-arrive date is Feb. 20,” he said. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/02/17/653817/p380-deemed-fair-price-for-pork-msrp-coming-in-march/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

MAV allocation delays seen potentially fueling inflation

February 17, 2025 | 8:14 pm



REUTERS

THE British Chamber of Commerce Philippines (BCCP) said the government needs to distribute the minimum access volume (MAV) allocations to traders, warning of disruptions to the supply of goods and the prospect that these might stoke inflation.

“Having encountered a similar issue last year, concerns over the delay have grown, potentially affecting the country’s supply and inflation,” BCCP Executive Director Chris Nelson said in a statement on Monday.

The MAV system is part of the country’s commitment to the World Trade Organization. The system sets import quotas for agricultural products entering the Philippines, within which such shipments pay reduced tariffs.

“MAV... should have been distributed at the beginning of the year — they have not been,” Mr. Nelson said.

“There is some discussion that they want to limit those MAV to processors. We would urge them to go back to the original system, which is to issue it straightforwardly. We do not want to see disruptions in supply,” he added.

He said that the original system has benefited both the UK and the Philippines and has assisted in lowering prices.

He also added that with the original system, Executive Order No. 62 is also in place to help augment supply and manage inflationary pressures.

“The pig herds have been affected by African Swine Fever (ASF), and the exports of British pork, along with other areas, keep down those prices,” he said.

Citing the Bureau of Animal Industry, the BCCP said that ASF continues to be active in nine regions, 15 provinces, 40 municipalities, and 130 barangays as of Jan. 31.

“(This) necessitates supply and demand for meat importers,” Mr. Nelson said.

Last week, the Department of Agriculture said that it is looking at imposing a maximum suggested retail price for pork, citing a gap of about P100 between the farmgate prices of P240 and P250 per kilo and the market prices of P380 to P420 per kilo. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/02/17/653815/mav-allocation-delays-seen-potentially-fueling-inflation/>

REMATE:

P3B cold storage program ng DA, kinwestyon ng KMP

February 17, 2025 17:07



MANILA, Philippines – KINUWESTSYON ng Kilusang ng Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) kung anong nangyari sa cold storage program ng Department of Agriculture (DA) at humihiling ng agarang kasagutan at pananagutan mula sa DA hinggil sa P3 bilyong cold storage program nito at ang Optimization and Resiliency In the Onion Industry Network (ORION) Project, dahil ang pinakabagong patakaran sa pag-aangkat ng sibuyas ay inaasahang magdudulot ng kalituhan sa mga lokal na magsasaka.

Ayon sa KMP, “Nakita na natin ito noon pa—bumaba ang presyo ng sibuyas at napilitang itapon ng mga magsasaka ang kanilang ani dahil sa sobrang suplay. Ngayon, dapat sagutin ng gobyerno: Ano ang nangyari sa pangako ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. na magtayo ng mas maraming cold storage facility para sa mga magsasaka?”

Sinabi pa ng KMP sa kanilang press statement: “Noong 2024, kinilala mismo ni Pangulong Bongbong Marcos Jr. na ang sobrang suplay ay nagpapababa ng mga presyo, at nagmungkahi ng cold storage bilang solusyon. Binanggit pa niya ang solar power bilang isang paraan upang mabawasan ang mga gastos sa pagpapatakbo. Kalaunan ay inanunsyo ni DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel na plano ng gobyerno na magtatag ng dalawang solar-powered cold storage facility sa Occidental Mindoro pagsapit ng 2025. Gayunpaman, nahihirapan pa rin ang mga magsasaka sa buong bansa na ma-access ang wastong imbakan, at patuloy ang malawakang pag-aaksaya ng sibuyas. Nasaan ang mga ipinangakong pasilidad na ito?” Tinuligsa ni Danilo Ramos KMP chairperson at Makabayan senatorial candidate ang polisiya ng DA.

“Paulit ulit lamang ang pagkakamali ng pamahalaan. Pinapayagan nito ang mga pag-import na bahain ang merkado sa pinakamasamang posibleng panahon—kapag ang mga lokal na magsasaka ay nag-aani. Ito ay humahantong sa labis na suplay, pagbagsak ng mga presyo, at tonelada ng mga nasayang na sibuyas. Sa halip na tulungan ang ating mga magsasaka, pinalala ng mga patakaran ng DA ang kanilang paghihirap.”

Ayon pa sa KMP noong 2024, bumaba ang presyo ng pulang sibuyas sa kasing baba ng P10 kada kilo sa mga pamilihan sa Dagupan City dahil sa sobrang supply.

Napilitan din ang mga magsasaka sa Nueva Ecija na magtapon ng mga sibuyas dahil umaapaw ang mga cold storage facility at mas gusto ng mga negosyante ang mga imported na bombilya.

Ang matinding pagbaba ng presyo ay naiugnay sa maagang pag-aani at labis na pag-asa sa cold storage, na nabigong patatagin ang merkado.

Sa kabila ng mga aral mula sa krisis ng sibuyas noong 2022—kung saan ang kakulangan ng mga pasilidad sa pag-iimbak at hindi wastong paghawak ay humantong sa pagkawala ng 100,000 metrikong tonelada ng mga sibuyas—ang DA ay nagpapatuloy sa mga patakaran na nabigong protektahan ang mga lokal na magsasaka. *Santi Celario*

<https://remate.ph/p3b-cold-storage-program-ng-da-kinwestyon-ng-kmp/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Better roads, bridges key to lower costs of farm products

Ada Pelonia
February 18, 2025



DA Sec. Francisco Tiu Laurel

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) wants to enhance the country's roads and bridges to ease the flow of farm products, lower transport costs, and boost food security.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he will seek a meeting with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to discuss improving the country's road and bridge infrastructure.

"The importance of a strong road and bridge network in agriculture, especially in an archipelago like the Philippines, cannot be overstated," Laurel said in a statement.

"Agriculture relies heavily on logistics, and transport infrastructure directly affects the cost and efficiency of moving farm inputs and produce," he added.

Laurel noted that well-maintained roads and bridges could lower transportation costs, reduce spoilage, and allow farmers to bring their goods to market faster. This could also translate to more stable prices for consumers, he added.

The DA said the issue with the country's roads and bridges would be particularly critical in the rice sector.

During the recent multiyear budget planning session of the agency, Laurel noted that Thailand and Vietnam have lower transport costs owing to better road conditions. Trucks in these countries could carry 8 to 10 tons more than the 41-ton limit in the Philippines.

"Better infrastructure enables a more efficient supply chain, reducing costs from farm to market," he said.

The DA explained that many Filipino farmers and traders overload trucks to cut costs, which tends to damage roads and bridges.

It added that the practice of truckers loading their vehicles with heavy loads or even beyond prescribed limits has led to the collapse of several bridges across Luzon and the Visayas in recent years.

Some bridges, though rated for specific loads, have been pushed beyond their limits due to excessive overloading.

"The DPWH manual calls for regular bridge inspections and load rating updates, but enforcement remains weak.

Without addressing inadequate road networks and overloading, the problem will persist," the DA said.

The agency said planned discussions between DA and DPWH aim to identify key areas for road and bridge upgrades, particularly in major agricultural regions.

"While improving infrastructure is a long-term effort, it is essential for the agricultural sector," the DA said.

"Investing in transport infrastructure is not just a necessity—it is vital for national growth and prosperity."

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/18/better-roads-bridges-key-to-lower-costs-of-farm-products/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Pork shortage in market lingers as ASF-hit hog farms still recovering

Ada Pelonia
February 17, 2025

LOCAL pork shortage due to the persisting effect of African swine fever (ASF) pushed up prices for the protein source in Metro Manila, according to the National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. (NatFed).

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is still studying the intervention it would roll out to address the spike in pork prices.

“Pork in the market is still quite short. The supply chain knows this so they are also taking this opportunity to earn some extra,” NatFed vice chairman Alfred Ng told the BusinessMirror on Monday.

“Local pork is short because of ASF last June to August [2024]. Many sows were culled so piglet production was lessened,” he added.

Ng also noted that farms hit by the deadly hog disease during the ASF outbreaks last year were still recuperating from the aftermath.

“Some farms need to clean, remodel their buildings, swab the environment before restocking. They need to look for loans or finances to restock.”

Despite this, Ng allayed concerns of a pork crisis, noting the surplus of pork imports that entered the country in 2024.

“There is no crisis [since there’s oversupply in imported pork]. Last year, 800 million kilos were brought in. It’s just that many Filipinos still like to consume fresh Pinoy pork,” he said.

Figures from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) showed that pork shipments rose by 21.98 percent to 671,561 metric tons (MT) as of end-November 2024 from the 550,539 MT recorded in the previous year.

However, Ng flagged the “disconnect” between farmgate and retail prices of pork.

“Farmgate is between P240 to P250 [per kilo]. Add P120 margins for viajero and vendor, that makes P360 to P370 only for kasim. So, there is still a disconnect between farmgate and retail prices.”

The prevailing price of pork ham stood at P380 per kilo while pork belly reached P450 per kilo, based on the latest government price monitoring report.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the agency is mulling over the interventions it would impose to address elevated pork prices, particularly looking at wholesale and farmgate prices.

“It looks like the wholesaler or farmgate are the issue and not retail [...] It seems the retailers’ margin is small,” Laurel told the BusinessMirror on Monday.

The DA earlier hinted at imposing a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for pork amid persistent high prices.

However, for Roehlano Briones, a senior research fellow at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), the MSRP on pork would not have a dent on prices.

“[The price increase] seems to be a lingering effect of ASF,” Briones told this newspaper.

“MSRP doesn’t work. It will not bring down the price [since] price depends on supply and demand,” he added.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/17/pork-shortage-in-market-lingers-as-asf-hit-hog-farms-still-recovering/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Analyzing PSA rice inventory data: The figures still do not add up!

Raul Q. Montemayor
February 18, 2025

Last February 20, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) released its rice stocks inventory estimates. PSA said that the country had 2.156 million tons of rice as of January 1, 2025, or only 128,740 tons higher than its stock position a year ago on January 1, 2024.

Local palay production in 2024 declined by 972,427 tons, equivalent to 612,628 tons of rice. That year, the country imported almost 4.78 million tons of rice, or about 1.2 million tons more than what it bought abroad in 2023. So, the decline in domestic output was more than offset by imports by some 600,000 tons.

If food consumption and all other factors basically remained unchanged much last year, we should have ended 2024 with around 600,000 tons more than our beginning stocks in January of said year. But PSA says the year-end stock level carried over to 2025 grew by just 128,740 tons.

More precisely, using PSA figures for production and beginning inventory, Bureau of Customs (BOC) data for imports, and Department of Agriculture (DA) factors in computing usage for seeds, industrial purposes, feeds and waste, and food consumption (37,500 tons per day), the 2024 ending inventory comes out to be 3.66 million tons.

This derived inventory is 1.5 million tons, or 41 percent, higher than PSA's figure of 2.156 million tons. It implies that we ended 2024 with almost 98 days of rice supply, whereas PSA data say we only had about 58 days when we started 2025.

Whom should we believe? What data should government policy makers use when making decisions about imports, rice and palay prices, and even the declaration of food security emergencies?

The only way that the 2025 starting inventory would match PSA's estimate of 2.156 million tons is if either domestic production dropped, or consumption rose.

Domestic rice production would have to fall to 10.3 million tons for the figures to add up. That means that palay production in 2024 would have declined to 16.4 million tons, or a huge 18 percent drop from the 2023 production of 20 million tons.

If output figures are unchanged, national rice consumption would have to increase by 11 percent from 37,500 to 41,625 tons per day, so that we can arrive at PSA's ending stock estimate of 2.156 million tons.

Again, what really happened?

If domestic output did decrease by 18 percent, DA should urgently review and revise its rice production programs, which receive almost half of the total DA budget and get supplemental support from the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) under the amended Tariffication Law (RTL). On the other hand, an increase in consumption in 2024 is highly unlikely, because unduly high rice prices then would have dampened demand.

Clearly, significant discrepancies exist in official government data on a critical commodity like rice.

A similar situation is likely happening with other major food products like corn, meats, and vegetables.

We have flagged these discrepancies before, but PSA's data problems keep recurring every year.

How can we make correct decisions, if we keep getting inaccurate and conflicting information?

Raul Montemayor is the FFF National Manager.

ITEM	January-December 2024		
	Derived Ending Inventory	Derived Production	Derived Consumption
Beginning inventory	2,027,180	2,027,180	2,027,180
Local Production (63% of palay output)	12,024,896	10,342,709	12,024,896
Imports	4,779,035	4,779,035	4,779,035
Total Supply	18,831,111	17,148,924	18,831,111
Utilization			
Seeds (75 kls/hectare harvested x 63%)	219,520	219,520	219,520
Industrial usage (4% of rice output)	480,996	413,708	480,996
Feeds and waste (6.5% of rice output)	781,618	672,276	781,618
Food consumption	13,687,500	13,687,500	15,193,057
Sub-total Utilization	15,169,634	14,993,004	16,675,191
Ending Inventory	3,661,477	2,155,920	2,155,920
Daily consumption	37,500	37,500	41,625
Days supply	97.64	57.49	51.79

ASSUMPTIONS

Palay to rice conversion	63.0%
Palay output 2024	19,087,136
Area harvested	4,645,921

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/18/analyzing-psa-rice-inventory-data-the-figures-still-do-not-add-up/>