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MANILA BULLETIN:

The coconut future

BY [JOHN TRIA](#)

Feb 18, 2025 08:19 AM

#MINDANAO



The popularity of online cooking shows has brought the world greater appreciation for Asian food. A good portion of these dishes are made with coconut. As the world's second-largest producer of coconuts after neighboring Indonesia, the Philippines can supply this growing need for coconut ingredients, and may yet emerge as an attractive destination for investors seeking to produce value-added products from the proverbial **tree of life**. Thai Coconut Public Company is building a manufacturing facility at the Anflo Industrial Estate in Panabo City in Davao del Norte, wisely positioning its plant in the country's largest coconut-producing region, near deep water ports that can bring its products to a wide world of buyers.

This investment complements the other large coconut processors such as the various CIIF Oil Mills, Century Manufacturing, Axelum Resources, and the Franklin Baker company, as well as various coconut and activated carbon manufacturing companies all with major plants in Mindanao. This and other news in the coconut sector reveal how corporate interest is growing in our coconut sector, making coconut production and processing a viable investment. Manufacturing can be boosted beyond the usual downstream products such as desiccated coconut and coconut oil.

A key policy measure of the Philippine government for the coconut industry is the passage of Republic Act (RA) 11524 in 2021 under the Duterte administration, which established the Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund (CFITF) that will finance plans to revitalize the industry.

Another is the increase of the Coconut Methyl Ester (CME) content of our diesel fuels from two percent to three percent as mandated under Department of Energy Department Circular No. 2024-05-0014. This CME blend percentage is expected to increase in the coming years. In a Nov. 8, 2024 Manila Bulletin article by Gabrielle Christel Galang, the measure is expected to require 900 million coconuts, producing 100-200 million liters of CME by local biofuel manufacturers. As the blend increases, so does the demand for coconuts to fill this local need. More jobs in this industry are expected. There may also be a growing interest in the broader manufacture of construction materials from coconut coir. These being manufacturing investments mean that the creation of other related jobs is expected, such as machine shop services, renewable energy production, transport, janitorial, canteen, and security services that create even more jobs.

These policy developments and investments in coconut processing can increase demand. The country's coconut farms is the single biggest agricultural sector by employment at about 2.5 million farmers. It would be a good idea to monitor developments in the implementation of these measures and the growth of such investments. What else can be done to boost the coconut sector? Apart from boosting demand for coconuts,

the Philippine Coconut Authority, the Department of Agriculture, and selected local governments can encourage the establishment of robusta coffee supply chains among its farmer beneficiaries. Lowland robusta coffee varieties grow well between coconut trees. With the increase in coffee shops nationwide, demand for locally grown robusta coffee beans is expected to increase, if it has not already gone up. Growing more of these means added income for coconut farmers. The growth of the coconut sector in the country is one of the keys to our manufacturing future, and will create jobs for the next generation.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/18/the-coconut-future>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DBM defends budget overspending amid criticism from former officials

BY [DERCO ROSAL](#)

Feb 18, 2025 04:00 PM

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has defended as justifiable the three consecutive years that the Marcos administration spent beyond its annual budget, as it claimed additional spending was covered by loans or excess revenue, not by increasing the fiscal deficit.

DBM Secretary Amenah Pangandaman told *Manila Bulletin* on Monday, Feb. 17, that the Marcos administration has been spending beyond its planned budget “primarily due to the additional releases charged against the unprogrammed appropriations (UA), special account in the general fund, increased interest payments, and tax expenditure fund (TEF) for customs duties and taxes.”

Pangandaman argued that these additional releases were covered either by loan proceeds or excess revenues, while releases for interest payments and TEF are made solely for booking or recording purposes. As of end-2024, the government’s outstanding debt reached ₱16.05 trillion, marking a 9.8 percent or ₱1.44 trillion rise from ₱14.62 trillion in 2023.

Citing careful evaluation of requests for additional programs, the budget chief further asserted that the overshoot is a managed adjustment rather than an uncontrolled breach of the budget.

Extra funding is approved by the DBM only if the requesting agency has extra income to cover the added expenses, or the agency can adjust its spending. With this, the additional program will not widen the government’s budget deficit, the DBM claimed.

“The total cash requirements for these years were lower than the total annual expenditure program, ensuring that the annual program was not breached,” Pangandaman noted.

But former Budget secretary Florencio Abad told *Manila Bulletin* on Tuesday, Feb. 18, that the current administration is “not fiscally prudent and responsible.”

“A lot of public funds are going to pork and patronage projects, displacing basic education, public health, nutrition and social welfare, and agriculture and strategic infrastructure investments,” said Abad, who was the DBM chief during the administration of former President Benigno Aquino III.

“For example: flood control projects are now 22 percent of the Department of Public Works and Highways’ (DPWH) budget and are bigger than the total budgets of the departments of Agriculture (DA) and of Agrarian Reform (DAR) combined,” he said.

“Or take the case of the Department of Transportation: in the 2024 General Appropriations Bill (GAB), ₱157 billion of the DOTr’s foreign-assisted projects (FAPs) were de-funded and used somewhere else,” Abad added.

Meanwhile, GlobalSource Partners analyst and former Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) deputy governor Diwa Guinigundo said that “exceeding the budget will bloat the fiscal deficit and reduce the so-called fiscal space.”

Guinigundo noted that borrowing is the “only one quick way” to tackle the overspending of the government. Such a move, he said, would “further undermine fiscal sustainability.”

Beyond this, Guinigundo also said this would “increase both the debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio and the debt servicing (principal and interest) ratio.”

Debt, fund redirection concerns

Abad argued that the government can spend beyond the original budget if additional revenues, grants, or loan proceeds become available, without using funds allocated for the budget. While he did not point to the deficit risks, he cited the country’s debt-to-GDP ratio as a concern. It has exceeded the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) 60 percent threshold, reaching 60.7 percent at end-2024.

As per Abad, the problem was the redirection of billions from the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) and the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp.'s (PDIC) deposit insurance fund, violating legal guidelines to finance unprogrammed spending. Some funds, he said, were redirected to lower-priority projects.

“If they had been prudent in using public funds, they shouldn’t have touched those. Now, they have used them for other purposes and must find additional funds to restore the President’s priorities,” he asserted.

Abad, on the other hand, clarified that some government expenditures may appear excessive due to delayed project implementation, leading to carry-over spending from previous budgets.

Procurement delays push project costs into the next fiscal year, inflating current disbursements. He said it’s essential to distinguish between funds used for past projects and those allocated for the current year.

According to the former budget chief, these carry-over appropriations, along with unprogrammed funds, contribute to the perception of overspending.

While the budget overshoot is justifiable, Abad doubts that the government has excess revenues in 2024.

“It’s very possible they have carryover expenditures, plus loan proceeds, which will be credited to the year they were budgeted, not the current year,” he said.

Latest data from the DBM showed that releases from last year’s budget hit ₱6.37 trillion, surpassing the ₱5.76-trillion programmed allotment by ₱610.9 billion, or 10.59 percent above-program.

In 2023, releases exceeded budget by ₱374.38 billion; in 2022 by ₱218.46 billion.

Last year, UA reached ₱531.37 billion. Major agencies with large shares include the DPWH’s ₱244.74 billion, the DOTr’s ₱70.5 billion, the Department of Health’s (DOH) ₱52.89 billion, the Department of Education’s (DepEd) ₱33.1 billion, and the Department of Agriculture’s (DA) ₱30.74 billion.

In 2023, UA stood at ₱328.37 billion and amounted to ₱184.84 billion in 2022—the starting year of the Marcos administration.

The budget deficit stood at P1.18 trillion in the first 11 months last year, widening further by ₱65.73 billion or 5.92 percent from the gap recorded during the same period in 2023.

https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/18/dbm-defends-budget-overshoot-amid-debt-worries#google_vignette

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Fishing ban in Zamboanga, Visayan Sea lifted

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

February 19, 2025 | 12:00am



Fishermen prepare their nets for fishing at a beach in Lian, Batangas on January 19, 2024.

STAR / Walter Bollozos

MANILA, Philippines — Commercial fishing vessels may now resume operations in Zamboanga peninsula and the Visayan Sea as the three-month fishing ban in these areas has been lifted, according to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

The BFAR, an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA), said the ban was officially lifted on Sunday.

“The close fishing season declared to preserve sardine population in East Sulu Sea, Basilan Strait and Sibuguey Bay has been lifted,” the BFAR said.

The three-month fishing ban is a critical measure aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the sardine industry, which is vital to the region’s economy and food security.

The sardine industry provides livelihood to fisherfolk, food processors and allied industries in Zamboanga peninsula.

“The fishing ban is a part of the government’s commitment to ecological preservation. It intends to replenish sardine population, promote responsible fishing practices and maintain long-term industry viability,” Isidro Velayo, BFAR assistant director for technical services, said.

Velayo said that responsible fishing, scientific fishery management and collaboration among stakeholders are important factors in maintaining the balance between economic growth and ecological preservation as well as ensuring sustainable development of the industry.

The opening of the fishing season is expected to boost the local sardine industry, generate employment opportunities and ensure a stable supply of fish for domestic and international markets.

The BFAR also lifted the fishing ban for sardines, herrings and mackerels in the Visayan Sea.

Commercial fishers may resume their operations within the conservation area, which was previously closed for three months to preserve fish species.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the resumption of the operation of commercial fishing vessels is expected to bring down retail prices of fish, particularly galunggong and sardine.

Retail prices of galunggong in Metro Manila markets ranged between P260 and P380 per kilo and sardine between P100 and P120 per kilo.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2025/02/19/2422545/fishing-ban-zamboanga-visayan-sea-lifted>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Let's use our brains



DEMAND AND SUPPLY - Boo Chanco - The Philippine Star

February 19, 2025 | 12:00am

There's no doubt we have enough Filipinos with good working brains that should have been used to elevate our country's economy a long time ago.

Now the window of opportunity may soon pass as the older generations exit. Tests show a good part of today's population have been badly educated and mentally stunted to have the brains needed in today's highly competitive digital age.

Agriculture and manufacturing, two areas of our economy where we have been badly overtaken in the region, could have been stellar performers if only our political leaders used our available brains.

But the well-educated Filipinos of our generation had to go abroad not only to earn a good living but to be appreciated for what they had to offer in terms of brainpower.

Filipino doctors, engineers and other scientists are among the best in the world. Belatedly recognizing this, our government has a token "Balik Scientist" program, supposedly to entice those drained brains to return and help the country progress. But those who did return experienced frustration. They do not even have the basic facilities to do their work, not to mention the proper budgetary support to conduct needed scientific research.

When the pandemic struck, we only had a handful of specialists working at the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine to identify the virus. Those tested had to wait days to find out if they were infected. By then, they have either recovered or have died. Because the virus keeps mutating, our virology experts must determine what new strains we are getting to guide our infectious disease physicians in handling patients. So, there was talk about putting up a virology institute so that we could be ready to address future viruses. Unfortunately, it was all talk. As I pointed out in a previous column, BBM was given a chance to show his priority. The Science and Technology Secretary met with him at Malacañang and asked for funds to complete the construction of the building to house the Virology and Vaccine Institute of the Philippines and the Philippine Center for Disease Prevention and Control.

Apparently, they were able to convince some Filipino virology experts working abroad to return and do their research here. BBM reassured the DOST officials that "We will find money for this when we are able to identify the specific items (other projects) not ready for implementation."

That is a nice way of saying that nothing is forthcoming. If BBM was honestly supportive of this vital health related project as he claimed, he would have allocated funds from his own budget.

A few days before, that was what BBM did when the Tourism department asked for P500 million, about the same amount DOST needed, to fund a questionable national branding campaign.

Our failure to use our brains has resulted in the mismanagement of our country. For example, our shameful agriculture output dwindled to an eight-year low in 2024, falling by 2.2 percent to P1.725 trillion. PSA data showed that this was the lowest since the P1.722 trillion recorded in 2016 and was also 2.2 percent lower

than 2023's P1.76 trillion. Given that we have world class quality experts in agriculture, how can this happen?

Dr. Fermin Adriano, one of the more eminent professors at UP Los Baños wrote in a recent opinion piece how a prominent international economist viewed our situation.

“Daron Acemoglu, MIT economist and main author (Harvard political scientist James Robinson is the co-author) of the much-acclaimed book, *Why Nations Fail*, observed that Philippine agriculture was a classic case for their work, which theorizes that the role of institutions (governance) is critical to whether the country develops or not.

“Acemoglu noted that the Philippines had world-class agricultural experts in the International Rice Research Institute and the UP College of Agriculture, whose faculty members studied agriculture in the US in the 1960s and the 1970s. The country sent experts to neighboring Asian countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam, which amply demonstrates the existence of high-quality human resources in the Philippines.

“But why is Philippine agriculture now a laggard in the region?” he asked.

The answer is obvious: Our problem is our politics. The decisions our clueless populist politicians make are often self-serving. National interest is hardly considered. So, why consult the experts at Los Baños?

“Take, for instance,” Dr. Adriano wrote, “the manner by which legislators butcher the budget of the Department of Agriculture (DA). They allocate agricultural development projects per congressional district instead of concentrating these in areas where the biggest productivity gains can be achieved.

“A classic, but verging on the ridiculous, case was where expenses for irrigation facilities were allocated to congressmen representing highly urbanized districts...”

Dr. Adriano cited a comprehensive study by the World Bank on the provision of farm-to-market roads (FMRs) also revealed three shocking findings. One, there was hardly any objective criteria used (i.e., such as poverty situation, potentials for economic growth, jobs generation, etc.) to determine where the FMRs should be constructed.

Most were dependent on what the congressmen wanted.

There is the National Center for Transportation Studies at the UP College of Engineering.

The NCTS is a research center that focuses on transportation studies and engineering. We invested in the training of the experts at NCTS but I doubt if they have been widely consulted to help devise solutions to our dreadful traffic problems.

We have urban planners and designers who are well regarded for their work in the Middle East and Singapore. But they aren't appreciated much in their own country.

Our government should start listening to topnotch Filipino experts. This is the only way we can hope to improve the prospects for our nation's future. So far, our politicians are using their brains to legalize plundering in our national budget and that only drags our country further down.

Let's use our brains for our country's good for a change.

Boo Chanco's email address is bchanco@gmail.com. Follow him on X [@boochanco](https://twitter.com/boochanco)

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/02/19/2422452/lets-use-our-brains>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

NFA rice rollout in Metro Manila begins today

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

February 19, 2025 | 12:00am



Newly delivered sacks of rice from Regions II and III are being organized inside the National Food Authority (NFA) warehouse in Valenzuela on January 20, 2025.

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — The National Food Authority will start today the rollout of NFA rice to local government units (LGUs) in Metro Manila, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

“The first release of NFA rice to LGUs will be done through the Food Terminal Inc.,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has issued a maximum suggested retail price (SRP) amid high rice prices despite a 20-percent tariff cut.

A food security emergency has also been declared.

Meanwhile, watchdog group Bantay Bigas spokesperson Cathy Estavillo has questioned the NFA’s failure to dispose of its stocks amid reports that some palay stocks in an Occidental Mindoro warehouse were stored for two years.

Pork max SRP

Meanwhile, the DA and stakeholders yesterday agreed that no pork max SRP will be imposed in the next two weeks.

“Each sector agreed to first study the cost structure, starting from the importers, traders, retailers and up to the biyaheros so that we can determine how we can bring down the retail price of pork,” De Mesa said.

At the consultation presided over by Tiu Laurel, De Mesa said it was determined that retailers did not cause high pork retail prices.

Studying the cost structure is necessary to determine the cause of the problem and the ideal pork retail price, farmers’ group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura executive director Jayson Cainglet said.

Zero budget

No funding has been allocated this year for the rice contract farming program of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA), according to Sen. Imee Marcos.

The program enabled the NIA to sell rice at P29 per kilo, Marcos said on Monday at a press conference in this city with Gov. Daniel Fernando and Vice Gov. Alex Castro.

Marcos said she could not understand why no funding was allotted.

“Subsidies to farmers reach maybe about P50,000 per hectare. Perhaps the budget could not handle it or there were implementation issues,” said Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor.

Under the program, P50,000 worth of assistance will be given to rice contract growers for land preparation and capital input, such as seeds, herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers, NIA Bulacan engineering and operations division manager Christian Manalo said earlier.

NIA Central Luzon director Josephine Salazar has confirmed that the funding stopped. — **Ramon Efren Lazaro**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/19/2422520/nfa-rice-rollout-metro-manila-begins-today>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

British Chamber urges distribution of MAV quota to importers

Philstar.com

February 18, 2025 | 3:26pm



A vendor arranges meat up for sale at Paco Public Market in Manila on February 1, 2024.

STAR / Edd Gumban

The British Chamber of Commerce Philippines (BCCP) along with importers and other trader groups, calls for the distribution of minimum access volume (MAV) quota to avoid trade disruptions affecting the country's supply and food inflation.

BCCP Executive Chairman Chris Nelson commended the developments under President Marcos administration, particularly, the extension of lowered tariff rates for pork and other agricultural commodities until 2028 under Executive Order No. 62.

On the other hand, Nelson echoed the concern that the Meat Importers and Traders Association (MITA) has relayed to its letter to the Department of Agriculture, citing that the delay on MAV distribution has also happened the previous year.

Despite headline inflation steady at 2.9% in January 2025, food inflation rose to 4.0% from 3.5% in December 2024, citing faster annual increases in the indices of meat and other parts of slaughtered land animals as one of the key drivers.

Nelson further noted that, "We do not want to see disruptions in supply. This is a business which has benefited both the UK and the Philippines. and is certainly assisting in lower prices. The fight on inflation is fundamentally about food, rice, and also, meat plays a big factor. We would urge the MAV to be issued as before to all the trade and importers. And we can see a good supply of high quality British pork, beef, and also now poultry, to the market."

The Philippines remains to be the 2nd largest UK pork export market in Asia next to China, citing over a value of £30 million of pork imports and over £2 million of beef imports in January-November 2024, according to the UK Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB).

Nelson further noted the significant work with the UK AHDB in promoting safe and quality British meat to the Philippine market. In 2024, it held three trade missions through market briefings and market visits, serving as a testament to the potential of the growing meat trade relations between the UK and the Philippines.

Moreover, the Philippines continues to position itself as one of the biggest meat importer, ranking 14th in 2023, primarily with its largest meat trading partners such as Brazil, to which the Philippines was cited to be the “fastest growing markets for pork in Asia.” Other large trading partners include Canada, Netherlands, Spain and the United States.

Domestic challenges continue to face the Philippine agricultural industry, noting the multiple weather disturbances and the African Swine Fever which has remained active in 9 regions, 15 provinces, 40 municipalities and 130 barangays, according to the Bureau of Animal Industry as of 31 January 2025.

The British Chamber reasserts the country’s commitment to the World Trade Organization, ensuring market access to trading partners subject to volume quotas under MAV to further assist on supply and inflation.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/biz-memos/2025/02/18/2422402/british-chamber-urges-distribution-mav-quota-importers>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

PH imported 20.8% more pork, beef in '24



BY JORDEENE B. LAGARE
FEBRUARY 19, 2025



FILE PHOTO: A marketgoer at the area in Balintawak public market sells pork, chicken, beef and other meat products. —LYN RILLON

Meat imports reached 1.45 million metric tons (MT) in 2024, surpassing the volume recorded in each of the last two years, as the outbreak of African swine fever and bird flu prompted dealers to turn to offshore suppliers.

Data from the Bureau of Animal Industry showed that last year's meat imports were 20.8 percent higher than the 1.2 million MT procured in the last year. In 2022, meat imports amounted to 1.36 million MT.

Higher pork and chicken purchases bolstered the meat imports, representing more than half of all inbound shipments.

“The DA (Department of Agriculture) should expedite the commercial release of ASF and AI (avian influenza) vaccines, or we will continue to increase importation of pork and poultry products to the detriment of our livestock and poultry producers,” Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. President Danilo Fausto said in a Viber message.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, local hog production dipped by 5.1 percent to 1.7 million MT in 2024.

Hog output had declined from 2019 to 2022 but production volume recovered in 2023.

“It is imperative that we strive to increase our productivity of agri products and reduce our reliance on imports, or it will cause the slow death of the basic foundation of our economy, which is agriculture where more than 50 percent of our population is dependent on,” Fausto added.

Pork made 50.6 percent of total meat imports. It was also 24 percent higher than the 591,898.94 MT imports in 2023.

Chicken imports totaled 472,211.45 MT, up by 10 percent while the volume of beef shipped to the archipelago surged by 40.6 percent to 203,898.64 MT. Both segments comprised 29.4 percent and 14.1 percent, respectively.

Traders also bought 37,795.38 MT of buffalo, down by 3.1 percent, along with 1,345.8 MT of turkey, 653.3 MT of lamb and 221.96 MT of duck.

Brazil retained its position as the leading meat exporter to the country with a share of almost 37 percent. Other major suppliers of meat products are the United States (15.2 percent); Spain (12.16 percent); Canada (8.05 percent) and Australia (5.19 percent).

The DA has created an export assistance help desk.

“This aims to oversee and facilitate the handling of exporters’ inquiries and/or concerns with regard to agricultural products, encompassing crops, fisheries, livestock and poultry with the goal of aiding them for the promotion of economic growth through exports,” the DA said in Memorandum Order No. 09.

<https://plus.inquirer.net/business/ph-imported-20-8-more-pork-beef-in-24/>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA, meat sector agree on no MSRP for pork for 2 weeks



BY JORDEENE B. LAGARE
FEBRUARY 19, 2025



FILE PHOTO: A vendor arranges pork meat at a stall in Libertad Market in Pasay City on Thursday, January 3, 2018. —GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

The Department of Agriculture (DA) will not impose a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for pork in the next two weeks pending further consultations with industry stakeholders.

Instead, meat producers, traders and retailers agreed during a dialogue with DA officials to review their respective cost structures as part of efforts to lower retail pork prices.

“MSRP is off the table in the next two weeks, depending on the cost structure. What the [agriculture] secretary wants is to lower retail prices without issuing an MSRP,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, also the DA spokesperson, said in an interview on Tuesday.

One of the cost components under review is the fee charged by “viajeros” or traders, which is estimated to add P80 to the retail price of pork per kilogram. De Mesa said retailers have nothing to do with elevated pork prices.

Striking a balance

“We all agreed that high pork prices are a short-term problem that should soon be resolved,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement on Tuesday following the consultative meeting with industry stakeholders.

The DA convened the meeting to identify factors driving up pork prices and determine whether or not to impose an MSRP to bring these down.

“We are trying to strike a balance between the interests of consumers and those involved in the pork industry,” Tiu Laurel added. “The clamor to bring the price of pork down is coming not just from consumers but from retailers as well; their sales are going down.”

The DA flagged the huge disparity between the prices of locally produced pork and imported frozen pork, noting that local pork is sold at more than P400 per kg while imported pork is cheaper at P250 per kg.

Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura executive director Jayson Cainglet said that pork farm-gate prices—the cost of selling produce between a farmer and trader—have declined to P250 per kg, with some local producers selling their hogs for P240 per kg.

“And since local production has improved, it [the farm-gate price] can also decrease,” Cainglet said. He explained that the formula for determining retail pork price was to add P100 to the prevailing farm-gate price.

“Right now, if we say the farm-gate price plus P100, it might not accurately reflect the actual retail price. We’re giving everybody a chance to present their actual costs until we arrive at the appropriate retail price,” he added.

The DA earlier hinted at setting the MSRP for pork at least than P400 per kg starting next month.

As of Feb. 15, public markets in Metro Manila were selling frozen *kasim* from P230 to P290 per kg, as opposed to last year’s P280 to P360 per kg, based on the DA’s price monitoring.

Frozen *liempo* was priced from P290 to P350 per kg compared with P330 to P400 per kg also last year.

<https://plus.inquirer.net/news/da-meat-sector-agree-on-no-msrp-for-pork-for-2-weeks/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Pork industry agrees to review cost structure ahead of MSRP

February 18, 2025 | 8:00 pm



PORK meat products are sold at the Murphy Market in Cubao, Quezon City, Feb. 11, 2021. — PHILIPPINE STAR/ MICHAEL VARCA

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Tuesday that pork producers, traders, and retailers have agreed to review their cost structures ahead of the imposition of a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for the commodity in March.

“We all agreed that high pork prices are a short-term problem that should soon be resolved,” Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said in a statement following a meeting with industry representatives.

He noted that *viajeros* or traders, who bring the commodity from farm to market, likely add P80 to the price of pork per kilo.

Assistant Secretary Arnel V. de Mesa said on Monday that given a farmgate price of P250 per kilo, a reasonable margin would be the retail price of pork to P380.

“We are trying to strike a balance between the interests of consumers and those involved in the pork industry,” Mr. Laurel said. “The clamor to bring the price of pork down is coming not just from consumers but from retailers as well; their sales are going down.”

Jason H. Cainglet, executive director of the agricultural group SINAG, advised the DA to temporarily refrain from imposing an MSRP, noting that farmgate prices for pork have already begun to decrease from P250 per kilo.

Imported frozen pork is currently priced around P250 per kilo, while domestic pork fetches over P400 per kilo, according to the DA.

Manny Pareja, a pork retailer from Las Piñas, told the consultative meeting that bigger customers such as restaurant and *carinderia* owners are already choosing imported meat over freshly slaughtered hogs.

He said that while many consumers still prefer fresh meat, the volume they buy has declined significantly because of high prices.

“High pork prices are considered a short-term issue that should be addressed in the near future, particularly after the commercial availability of the African Swine Fever (ASF) vaccine,” Mr. Laurel said.

The DA said the Bureau of Animal Industry is hoping that the “positive results” of the initial ASF vaccination rounds will convince the Food and Drug Administration to allow its commercial use.

The BAI said on Monday that about 30,000 hogs have been vaccinated against ASF. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/02/18/654092/pork-industry-agrees-to-review-cost-structure-ahead-of-msrp/>

REMATE:

NFA magpapamahagi na ng bigas sa gitna ng food security emergency

February 19, 2025 07:12



MANILA, Philippines – Magsisimula nang ipamahagi ng National Food Authority (NFA) ang dalawang buwang imbentaryo ng bigas sa mga lokal na pamahalaan, simula ngayong Miyerkules, Pebrero 19, bilang bahagi ng food security emergency para sa bigas.

Ayon kay NFA Administrator Larry Lacson, kabilang sa unang makakatanggap ang San Juan, Valenzuela, Navotas, at Camarines Sur.

Ibebenta ito sa Food Terminal Incorporated (FTI) sa halagang P33 kada kilo, habang ang LGUs at iba pang ahensya ng gobyerno ay maaaring ipagbili ito sa P35 kada kilo sa publiko.

Layunin nitong pababain ang presyo ng bigas sa merkado at palayain ang espasyo sa mga bodega ng NFA para sa pagbili ng lokal na palay. Target ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na maibenta ang 150,000 metric tons (MT) ng NFA rice stocks sa loob ng anim na buwan.

Noong Enero, umabot sa 284,810 MT ang NFA rice stocks—485.1% mas mataas kumpara sa 48,680 MT noong Enero 2024, ayon sa Philippine Statistics Authority. *Santi Celario*

<https://remate.ph/nfa-magpapamahagi-na-ng-bigas-sa-gitna-ng-food-security-emergency/>

REMATE:

Pagbusisi sa mga gastos sinang-ayunan ng mga pinuno ng industriya ng baboy – DA chief

February 18, 2025 18:36



MANILA, Philippines- Pabor si Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. noong Martes na ang mga prodyuser, mangangalakal, at retailer ng baboy ay sumang-ayon na suriin ang kanilang mga istruktura ng gastos sa pagsisikap na bawasan ang presyo ng baboy, na naging isang lumalaking alalahanin para sa mga mamimili.

Sa isang pahayag kasunod ng isang consultative meeting kasama ang mga pangunahing stakeholder, sinabi ni Secretary Tiu Laurel na ang mataas na presyo ng baboy ay itinuturing na isang panandaliang isyu na dapat matugunan sa malapit na hinaharap, lalo na pagkatapos ng komersyal na availability ng African Swine Fever vaccine.

“Napagkasunduan nating lahat na ang mataas na presyo ng baboy ay isang panandaliang problema na dapat na malutas sa lalong madaling panahon,” sabi niya.

Kaugnay nito, umaasa ang Bureau of Animal Industry na ang mga positibong resulta ng ASF vaccine ay makukumbinsi ang Food and Drug Administration na payagan ang komersyal na paggamit ng bakuna.

Ang pagpupulong, na ipinatawag ng Department of Agriculture (DA), ay naghangad na tukuyin ang mga salik na nagtutulak sa pagtaas ng halaga ng baboy at masuri kung ang maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) ay dapat na ipataw upang maibsan ang pasanin sa mga mamimili.

“Sinisikap naming bigyan ng balanse ang interes ng mga mamimili at ang mga sangkot sa industriya ng baboy,” dagdag ni Laurel. “Ang sigaw na babaan ang presyo ng baboy ay hindi lamang nagmumula sa mga mamimili kundi pati na rin sa mga retailer; bumababa ang kanilang benta.”

Samantala, pinayuhan ni Jason Cainglet, executive director ng agricultural group na SINAG, ang DA na pansamantalang iwasang magpataw ng MSRP, dahil nagsimula nang bumaba ang farm gate prices para sa baboy mula sa P250 kada kilo.

Kinilala ni Secretary Laurel ang interes ng industriya na gawing mas abot-kaya ang baboy sa mga mamimili, lalo na’t lumalawak ang agwat ng presyo sa pagitan ng locally-produced at imported na baboy. Ang imported frozen na baboy ay kasalukuyang nasa P250 kada kilo, habang ang lokal na baboy ay ibinebenta sa mahigit P400 kada kilo. **Santi Celario**

<https://remate.ph/pagbusisi-sa-mga-gastos-sinang-ayunan-ng-mga-pinuno-ng-industriya-ng-baboy-da-chief/>

REMATE:

DA magpapatupad ng maximum SRP sa karneng baboy sa Marso

February 18, 2025 11:46



MANILA, Philippines – NAKATAKDANG ipatupad ng Department of Agriculture ang maximum SRP para sa karne ng baboy ngayong Marso sa gitna ng pagtaas ng presyo ng karne ng baboy.

Makikita sa data mula sa DA Bantay Presyo na may ilang pork cuts ang binebenta ng P480 kada kilo sa ilang wet markets sa Metro Manila.

Sinabi ni Agriculture spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa na ang konsultasyon sa mga stakeholders ay isasa-pinal ngayong linggo upang ang maximum SRP ay maipatupad ngayong buwan. Ang pinal na pigura para sa MSRP ay hindi pa naia-anunsyo subalit nauna nang nagpahiwatig ang mga opisyal na ito’y mababa sa P400.

“Kung farmgate mo P250, so yung nababanggit nga ng 100 to 100 plus na profit margin. So P380 is reasonable. Sinabi na naman ni Secretary, anything above 400 is medyo sobra,” ayon kay De Mesa. Nauna nang itinakda ng departamento ang ‘maximum SRP’ o ‘MSRP’ para sa bigas, regular na ibinababa para maimpluwensiyahan ang umiiral na market prices.

Ang maximum suggested retail price para sa imported rice ay ibinaba na sa P52/kilo simula Pebrero 15. Ito’y alinsunod sa mga plano ng Department of Agriculture na unti-unting bumababa ang MSRP habang binibigyan naman ng panahon at oras ang mga retailers na tapusin ang fold stock.

Ito ang pangalawang pagkakataon na ang MSRP para sa imported rice ay naibaba.

Una rito ay P58/kilo, at pagkatapos ay ibinaba sa P55/kilo sa unang bahagi ng Pebrero.

Winika pa ni DA Agriculture Spokesperson Arnel de Mesa na sa susunod na buwan, buwan ng Marso, mas maibababa ito ng P49/kilo.

“Kaya nga tayo mag-set ng MSRP for the compliance. At kaya nga merong pag-aaral muna and then susunod ang mga konsultasyon para lahat aware dun sa mga gagawing hakbang at para bago pa man din magkaroon ng paglalagat ng MSRP. So yung likelihood ng compliance mataas,” ang sinabi ni De Mesa.

“The same na naging strategy with rice. Malaman natin na dapat ganito lamang yung presyo so pag naglatag tayo ng MSRP, susunod sila at maiwasan yung sobrang profit yun o sobrang paglalagay ng mataas na presyo,” dagdag na wika nito.

Pinag-iisipan ng departamento ang direct sale ng mas murang Karne ng baboy, kapareho ng Rice for All program.

“Similar to rice where we introduce yung Rice for All, we are also looking in the possibility that DA can also intervene doon,” aniya pa rin. *Kris Jose*

<https://remate.ph/da-magpapatupad-ng-maximum-srp-sa-karneng-baboy-sa-marso/>

ABANTE:

Presyo ng baboy tatapyasan, MSRP isinuka

Abante News

- February 18, 2025



Inanunsiyo ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. nitong Martes na pumayag ang mga pork producer, trader at retailer na rebyuhin ang kanilang cost structure sa hangarin na maibaba ang presyo ng karneng baboy sa pamilihan.

Ang pahayag ni Tiu Laurel ay ginawa matapos ang consultative meeting sa mga lider ng hog industry sa bansa.

“We all agreed that high pork prices are a short-term problem that should soon be resolved,” ayon sa kalihim.

Binanggit ni Laurel na ang mga retailer na mismo ng baboy ang nagsabing kailangan nilang ibaba ang presyo dahil bumabagsak na ang kanilang benta.

Malaki umano ang agwat ng presyo ng imported frozen pork na mabibili ng P250 per kilo sa mga grocery kumpara sa local pork na pumapalo sa P400 bawat kilo.

“Kung dati po isang kilo ang binibili, ngayon kalahit o one-fourth na lang. Minsan nga po, kapag nalaman ang presyo, tumatalikod na lang para bumili ng manok o isda,” wika ng isang retailer sa pulong.

Nakiusap din ang grupong SINAG na huwag munang ipatupad ang maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) dahil sila na mismo ang gagawa ng paraan para maibaba ang presyo ng baboy sa bansa.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/02/18/presyo-ng-baboy-tatapyasan-msrp-isinuka/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA puts plan for maximum retail price for pork on hold

Ada Pelonia
February 19, 2025



DA Sec. Francisco Tiu Laurel

THE plan to impose a maximum suggested retail price for pork will be put on the back burner until a study on cost structure is finalized, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

“For now, [there will be] no MSRP,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. told the BusinessMirror.

“[The] industry will review their costing and help try to reduce the cost or price of pork. [They] will send their position next week,” he added.

The agency held a consultative meeting with key stakeholders on Tuesday to identify the driving factors behind elevated pork prices and assess whether an MSRP should be imposed to alleviate the burden on consumers.

Laurel said pork producers, traders, and retailers have agreed to review their cost structures to reduce the price of pork.

He noted that among the cost structures under review are those of viajeros or traders, which are now estimated to add P80 per kilo.

“We are trying to strike a balance between the interests of consumers and those involved in the pork industry,” Laurel said.

“The clamor to bring down the price of pork is coming not just from consumers but from retailers as well; their sales are going down,” he added.

The DA chief also acknowledged the industry's interest in making pork more affordable to consumers, especially amid the widening price gap between locally produced and imported pork. Currently, imported frozen pork is priced at around P250 per kilo, while local pork is sold at over P400 per kilo, based on the latest government price monitoring report.

'Boost production'

Meanwhile, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa stressed the need to boost pork production, which would help address the price hikes.

"We agreed that it's important to increase productivity and production—the volume of pork that we can expect in the coming months," De Mesa told reporters in Filipino during a briefing on Tuesday.

He also said that the African swine fever (ASF) vaccine, which has been used under government-controlled vaccination, could be available for commercial use by April.

"Secretary [Laurel's] target is that by the first week of April, the AVAC vaccine from Vietnam will have commercial approval," De Mesa said.

The agency noted that the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) expressed hope that positive results of the ASF vaccine would persuade the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to allow the commercial use of the vaccine.

The National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. (NatFed) recently told the BusinessMirror that local pork shortage due to the persisting effect of ASF pushed up prices for the protein source in Metro Manila. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/17/pork-shortage-in-market-lingers-as-asf-hit-hog-farms-still-recovering/>)

"Local pork is short because of ASF last June to August [2024]. Many sows were culled so piglet production was lessened," NatFed vice chairman Alfred Ng said.

He 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."

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/19/da-puts-plan-for-maximum-retail-price-for-pork-on-hold/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

PHL meat imports surge to a record 1.45MMT in 2024

Ada Pelonia
February 19, 2025

THE country's meat imports surged to a record high in 2024, latest government data showed. Figures from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) showed that meat imports expanded by 20.40 percent to 1.45 million metric tons (MMT) in 2024 from 1.20 MMT recorded in the previous year. Chicken imports grew by 10.69 percent to 472,211 metric tons (MT) from 426,619 MT in 2023, based on BAI data.

Mechanically deboned meat (MDM) consisted of the bulk of shipments at 248,550 MT, with chicken leg quarter trailing behind at 131,810 MT.

The country's top suppliers of chicken last year were Brazil (237,395 MT), the United States (158,159 MT), and Poland (24,010 MT).

Pork shipments jumped by 23.96 percent to 733,729 MT in 2024 from 591,888 MT in the previous year.

BAI data showed that a chunk of the imports were pork cuts and offals at 281,993 MT and 247,115 MT, respectively.

Industry sources said African swine fever (ASF) outbreaks which upended the supply chain contributed to the surge in pork shipments.

The top sources of pork imports came from Brazil (210,108 MT), Spain (174,054 MT), and Canada (97,163 MT).

BAI data also indicated that beef imports soared by 40.62 percent to 203,898 MT from 145,002 MT in 2023, the bulk of which consisted of beef cuts at 141,202 MT.

The top suppliers of beef shipments were Brazil (88,775 MT), Australia (53,982 MT), and the United States (13,737 MT).

Meanwhile, BAI data also indicated that turkey imports skyrocketed by 92.62 percent to 1,345 MT last year from 698 MT in 2023.

Despite this, contractions were registered in buffalo shipments, which declined by 3.08 percent to 37,795 MT from 38,995 MT.

The country's duck imports also shrank by 26.53 percent to 221 MT from 302 MT, while lamb shipments dropped by 10.26 percent to 653 MT from 727 MT.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/19/phl-meat-imports-surge-to-a-record-1-45mmt-in-2024/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

PLAN helicopter buzzes BFAR patrol aircraft in Bajo de Masinloc

Rex Anthony Naval
February 18, 2025

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) reported that a People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) helicopter performed dangerous maneuvers at a Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) aircraft conducting a "maritime domain awareness" (MDA) flight over Bajo de Masinloc Tuesday morning.

"At approximately 0700 hours (7 a.m.) today (Tuesday), the BFAR conducted a MDA flight over the territorial airspace of Bajo De Masinloc, accompanied by personnel from the PCG and photojournalists," the agency said in a statement.

At 8:39 a.m., a PLAN helicopter with tail number 68 appeared and performed dangerous flight maneuvers towards the BFAR aircraft.

The PCG said this reckless action posed a serious risk to the safety of the pilots and passengers aboard the BFAR aircraft.

"The PLAN helicopter came as close as three meters to the port side and above the BFAR aircraft, raising significant concerns regarding the PLAN's clear violation and blatant disregard for the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) international aviation regulations," it added. Despite this incident, the PCG and the BFAR remain committed to asserting Philippine sovereignty, sovereign rights, and maritime jurisdiction in the West Philippine Sea, despite the aggressive and escalatory actions of China.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/18/plan-helicopter-buzzes-bfar-patrol-aircraft-in-bajo-de-masinloc/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

PHL rice prices ease as imports get cheaper

BusinessMirror Editorial

February 19, 2025

The Philippines, the largest rice importer globally, can breathe a little easier now that India has chosen to relax its restrictions on exports of this essential food staple. This and the harvest of rice in Vietnam have led to the decline in international quotations. Lower international prices mean cheaper imports, and sellers tend to base their pricing decisions on the cost of rice from abroad, among other factors.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reported that wholesale rice prices in the major suppliers of the Philippines fell in January. In Thailand, wholesale rice prices declined by 8 percent month-on-month in January, weighed by increased market availabilities from the 2024 main harvest, estimated at an above-average level, and generally weak international demand. Also, FAO said prices were about 30 percent lower than year-earlier levels after generally declining throughout 2024.

In Vietnam, where the Philippines buys most of its imported rice requirements, wholesale rice prices decreased month-on-month in January, and they were between 20 to 40 percent lower year-on-year, owing to adequate market availability from the recently concluded autumn/winter and 10th-month harvests. The slowdown in international demand was also cited as a major factor behind the slide in quotations.

In the Philippines, although retail prices of regular and well milled rice, the country's main staples, declined marginally in January 2025, FAO noted that prices remained at near-record levels after sharp increases between August 2023 and April 2024. The UN agency said this was driven by rising prices in the international market, strong domestic demand and concerns about the effect of unfavorable weather conditions on the its paddy crop output. Rice harvest in the country will start soon and this is expected to pull down local prices.

Compared to year-ago levels, data from the Department of Agriculture as of February 15 showed rice prices declined by nearly 20 percent. The weekly average price of local regular-milled and well-milled rice in markets in the National Capital Region (NCR) reached P41.53 and P46.64, respectively. A year ago, prices were at P50.35 per kilo for regular milled and P52.21 per kilo for the well-milled variant.

Lower international quotations, the harvest of the dry season crop, as well as the decision of the government to release its buffer stock should augur well for consumers who continue to prefer white rice over other varieties. Even if it is considered harmful to the body when consumed in large quantities, Filipino consumers buy milled rice in bulk because it is affordable compared to meat products. The staple becomes their primary source of energy, particularly during periods when food prices are high.

The government, however, should not be complacent as its own data indicated that prices were almost on a par with the figures seen in February 2024 even after the Philippines entered the peak of rice harvest in April 2024. While we all hope that cheaper rice is here to stay, international developments and the lack of foresight of policymakers could again cause prices to shoot up to record levels.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/19/phl-rice-prices-ease-as-imports-get-cheaper/>

ABANTE TONITE:

Bigas sa kadiwa puno ng bukbok

February 18, 2025



Imbestigahan ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang natanggap na reklamo na ilang bigas na binebenta sa Kadiwa store sa Quezon City ay puno ng bukbok.

Ayon sa report ng ABS-CBN News, isang seller sa Murphy Market ang nagpakita ng binebenta nilang bigas na may mga insekto.

“Based sa feedback ng mga namimili, meron sila nakita na kuto or bukbok na tinatawag nila, merong buyer na bumalik kasi sako-sako binibili nila, hindi namin nakikita ‘yung loob ng sako kung meron,” kuwento ni Neil Sañoza, kahera ng Kadiwa Stall sa Murphy Market.

Aniya, mas magandang klase ng bigas ang binebenta nila noon kaysa ngayong binagsak na ang presyo nito.

“Karamihan me-ron eh, meron sakong marami, meron konti lang. Nasa loob ng bigas ‘yung bukbok. Nung P40 pa ‘yung bigas, mas maganda, ngayon, mas madilaw,” paliwanag pa niya.

Nangako naman ang DA na sisiyasatin nila ang binubukbok na bigas pero nanindigan ito na ang binebenta sa mga Kadiwa Stall ay dumaan sa masusing testing.

“Pina-check namin pero ang sabi ng FTI at NFA, lahat ng bigas ay dumadaan sa mga pagsusuri, kung may ganon talaga, icheck naman nila ‘yun,” saad ni DA spokesman Arnel de Mesa.

Maaaring isolated case lang umano ito dahil sa ibang Kadiwa stall ay magaganda naman ang binebentang bigas.

Ibinaba ng DA ang presyo ng bigas sa mga Kadiwa outlet sa ilalim ng Rice-for-All (RFA) program.

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/02/18/bigas-sa-kadiwa-puno-ng-bukbok/>

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:

Maximum SRP sa karne ng baboy, ipatutupad ng DA

February 19, 2025 | 12:00am



Ayon kay DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, ngayong linggo ay isasapinal na nila ang pag-uusap sa pagitan ng mga stakeholders para sa pagpapatupad ng SRP sa susunod na buwan.

STAR / Jesse Bustos

MANILA, Philippines — Dulot nang patuloy na pagtaas ng presyo ng karne ng baboy, plano na rin ng Department of Agriculture na ipatupad ang maximum suggested retail price sa naturang produkto sa susunod na buwan ng Marso.

Ayon kay DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, ngayong linggo ay isasapinal na nila ang pag-uusap sa pagitan ng mga stakeholders para sa pagpapatupad ng SRP sa susunod na buwan.

Anyang, ang pagpapairal ng SRP sa karneng baboy ay magbibigay daan sa pagbaba ng presyo nito sa mga pamilihan.

Tiniyak naman ni De Mesa na maaring mas mababa pa sa P400 kada kilo ang ipatutupad na maximum SRP sa baboy.

Una nang nagpatupad ang DA ng maximum SRP sa bigas para sa pagpapababa ng presyo ng kada kilo ng bigas.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2025/02/19/2422521/maximum-srp-sa-karne-ng-baboy-ipatutupad-ng-da>