

CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY FEBRUARY 02, 2025

A. MANILA BULLETIN:

Farmers' group warns DA: Don't sacrifice farmers in rice price cut plan

No egg shortage this year, contrary to DA's warning, says PEBA

B. THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Unnecessary delay

How PLDT-Smart digital program empowered farming venture of former employee

Harvest to salvage thin red onion stocks

DA taking steps to prevent egg shortage, price surge

Graduating beneficiaries of 4Ps to get continued support

C. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Agri chief urges steps to avert egg shortage

D. BUSINESS WORLD:

Tobacco exports seen growing with FTAs, removal of non-tariff barriers

Additional funding sought for banana industry

E. REMATE:

Food security declaration lilimitahan sa lugar na may 'extraordinary prices' ng bigas

Banta ng bird flu sa presyo ng itlog, aagapan ng DA

F. THE MANILA TIMES:

Fishers groups see better marine resource management under new BFAR chief

MANILA BULLETIN:

Farmers' group warns DA: Don't sacrifice farmers in rice price cut plan

BY JEL SANTOS

Feb 2, 2025 01:43 PM



(MB FILE PHOTO)

A farmers' group has warned the Department of Agriculture (DA) against rushing its rice price reduction plan, stressing that it must not come at the cost of farmers' livelihoods.

The DA is reportedly set to declare a national food security emergency in rice on Feb. 4, which would allow the National Food Authority (NFA) to release its rice stocks—around 300,000 metric tons or six million bags—through local government units (LGUs) and Kadiwa outlets at below-market prices.

In a statement on Sunday, Feb. 2, the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) estimated that if the NFA proceeds with its plan to release 30,000 metric tons of rice per month, it could supply nearly 25 percent of the Metro Manila rice market.

“If NFA rice is sold at P38 per kilo, traders—to remain competitive—will have to buy dry palay from farmers at P19 per kilo. At this price, most rice farmers will either break even or have very little left after paying debts and other expenses,” Raul Montemayor, the national manager of FFF, said.

While the move may help decongest NFA warehouses to accommodate the upcoming harvest, Montemayor noted that the agency's P9 billion procurement fund for 2025 can only absorb four percent of palay (unmilled rice) output in the first half of the year.

“Additionally, few farmers actually manage to sell their palay to NFA, because they lack access to dryers and post-harvest facilities needed to comply with the agency's strict grain quality standards,” he added.

The farmers' group has also called on the agriculture department to clarify its basis for declaring a food security emergency.

Under Republic Act (RA) No. 12078, which amended the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) must first recommend such a declaration based on an official formula that determines an “extraordinary increase in rice prices.” The DA Secretary can then use this formula as grounds for declaring an emergency, FFF stated.

However, citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the FFF noted that well-milled rice (WMR) prices peaked at P56.44 per kilo in March 2024 but have since declined, averaging P54.38 per kilo in December 2024. Regular milled rice (RMR) followed a similar trend.

“How can you declare an emergency now, when prices are already dropping and the extraordinary increase in prices actually occurred a year ago? How will you know when it is time to lift the emergency declaration?” Montemayor asked.

Call for action vs profiteers

The FFF also questioned why the DA and other government agencies were not taking action against importers, wholesalers, and traders allegedly profiting from high rice prices, despite the reduction in import costs following the 20 percent cut in rice tariffs in July 2024.

As such, the group urged Congress to address inconsistencies in the newly enacted Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Law and the amended RTL.

The FFF pointed out that the DA’s reported plan to allow supermarkets to sell NFA rice might violate legal restrictions, which state that government rice stocks can only be sold at negotiated prices to national agencies, LGUs, and Kadiwa outlets during emergencies. Private entities may only purchase NFA stocks if they are aging and exclusively through an auction.

Earlier, the DA announced its plan to distribute Kadiwa rice in major supermarkets and convenience stores nationwide, aiming to make affordable rice more accessible to consumers.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/2/farmers-group-warns-da-don-t-sacrifice-farmers-in-rice-price-cut-plan>

MANILA BULLETIN:

No egg shortage this year, contrary to DA's warning, says PEBA

BY JEL SANTOS

Feb 2, 2025 02:50 PM



(MB FILE PHOTO)

Contrary to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.'s statement about a potential egg shortage in April, the Philippine Egg Board Association (PEBA) has guaranteed a stable supply throughout the year.

In an ambush interview, PEBA President Francis Uyehara dismissed concerns about a looming shortage, emphasizing that egg production is expected to be higher this year compared to 2024.

“Wala pong projected shortage when it comes to table eggs. ‘Yun pong sinasabi na maraming nalugi last year, yun po ay totoo, nalugi po sila summer of last year kaya po ang nangyari, nagbawas sila ng kanilang alagang manok noong summer season (There is no projected shortage when it comes to table eggs. What is being said about many farmers suffering losses last year is true—they incurred losses during the summer of last year, which led them to reduce the number of chickens they raised during the summer season),” Uyehara explained.

According to him, the reduction in flock sizes during the summer months led to increased egg prices in the following months.

However, the PEBA president said that producers have since repopulated their flocks, stabilizing supply by the end of 2024.

“Ang ating kasamahan, nagsimula na po silang magrepopulate. Kaya pangako naming, pagdating ng December, hindi po ganoon kataas ang presyo (Our fellow members have already started repopulating. That’s why we promised that by December, prices would not be too high),” Uyehara said.

“Noong November, December, nagstabilize na po ang presyo ng itlog. Mayroon na po tayong sufficient production supply ng table eggs during the months of November and December last year (In November and December, egg prices stabilized. We had a sufficient production supply of table eggs during those months last year),” he went on.

Uyehara questioned the basis of Laurel's warning, stating that PEBA has not observed any indicators of a forthcoming shortage.

He stated that he was unsure of the source of Laurel's information, explaining that although they hold regular meetings and consultations with the PCAFI group, he wasn't aware of who had supplied the details on this matter.

Price fluctuations, warnings vs misinformation

The PEBA president noted that while demand for eggs significantly dropped after the holiday season, farmgate prices have already decreased and should be reflected in retail prices.

“Now after ng New Year because of the holiday season, pagpasok ng January, ‘yun po ang pinoproblema natin. Ang problema natin yung extreme fluctuation ng demand. Malaki po ang ibinaba ng table eggs after ng New Year (Now, after the New Year and due to the holiday season, the problem we're facing is the extreme fluctuation in demand. The price of table eggs dropped significantly after the New Year),” he said.

Uyehara cautioned retailers against increasing prices due to misinformation, urging them to follow farmgate rates.

“Because of inaccurate information, baka retailers natin magkanya-kanyang taas dahil nag-assume sila. Sa amin po dapat ang maging reference natin yung farmgate price. Ang farmgate price P5.60 to P6. P6.30, ‘yun po ang farmgate, which is tolerable (Due to inaccurate information, retailers might raise prices on their own because they're making assumptions. For us, the reference should be the farmgate price, which is between P5.60 to P6.30—this is a tolerable farmgate price),” he stressed.

No bird flu impact

Uyehara also downplayed the impact of bird flu outbreaks in Europe and America, saying that the country's parent stock supply was secured last year, ensuring that production remains unaffected.

“Right now, mayroon po tayong issue sa bird flu sa European countries. Ano po ang epekto nito? Iyong importation ng PS (Parent Stock) for this year, wala pong epekto ang bird flu issue sa Europe at Amerika, dahil parent stock na inaasahan natin this year ay dumating na po last year ;Right now, we have an issue with bird flu in European countries. What is its effect? The importation of parent stock (PS) for this year is not affected by the bird flu issue in Europe and America because the parent stock expected for this year already arrived last year),” he explained.

Laurel had earlier warned of a potential egg shortage by April, blaming an oversupply and low demand in 2024 that led many local producers to cull their hens, reducing the egg-laying population.

To address this, the DA is reportedly taking steps to stabilize egg supply and prices, including closely monitoring production trends and ensuring market stability.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/2/no-egg-shortage-this-year-contrary-to-da-s-warning-says-peba>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Unnecessary delay



HIDDEN AGENDA - Mary Ann LL. Reyes - The Philippine Star

February 2, 2025 | 12:00am

Last November, our government announced that it is delaying any further sugar importation plans until mid-2025, as agreed upon in a meeting between Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) administrator Pablo Luis Azcona.

This move, it said, aims to shield domestic producers since both raw and refined sugar stocks are said to be sufficient to cover projected demand and that the delay will allow for a clearer view of the domestic supply after this harvest season, which has been affected by El Niño, lowering sugar yields and delaying the harvest.

The SRA earlier said that Philippine raw sugar production for crop year 2024-2025 is projected to drop by 7.29 percent to 1.78 million metric tons, the lowest in 25 years due to the adverse effects of extreme weather conditions.

Because local sugar production has been on a decline, at best stagnant, in the past so many years, it has not been able to meet demand, which on the other hand has been on the rise.

Market analyst Knowledge Sourcing Intelligence recently observed that the Philippines has a rapidly growing food & beverage (F&B) industry and one of the biggest contributors to the nation's economy, making up about half of its manufacturing sector.

It noted that the overall food and beverages market expansion will increase the demand for sugar in the sector and that the rapid proliferation of chain restaurants and meal delivery services adds to this need, as consumers seek different culinary experiences that frequently include sweetened beverages and sweets. The report also mentioned that the online segment of the Philippine sugar market is expected to grow significantly owing to several factors, such as evolving consumer behaviors coupled with its technological advancements and the evolving landscape of e-commerce.

It explained that online shopping being convenient, consumers can now access a large array of sugar products from different companies without visiting physical stores. "All such platforms offer in-depth product descriptions, customer reviews, and competitive pricing, enabling consumers to make well-informed decisions. E-commerce platforms are particularly helpful for specialty sugars like muscovado, as most supermarkets will not carry them. They are essential to consumers who want something unique and producers who seek to reach more people. In this regard, according to the International Trade Administration, in 2021, the e-commerce market sales of the Philippines were \$17 billion, which, by 2025, will witness an increase of 17 percent, reaching \$24 billion," it said.

It added that the move toward health-conscious eating has resulted in a growing market for organic and natural sugar alternatives, compelling traditional sugar producers to improve their product offerings. This trend not only appeals to health-conscious customers but also creates new opportunities for growth in the sugar business, the report said.

This rise in health consciousness among Filipino consumers, it said, has brought about a change in the way they purchase. "Natural and unrefined sugars are the new favorites as consumers opt for healthier alternative sources of sugar to avoid processed sugars. Online retailers are filling this niche market by carrying specialty products where taste, quality, and health benefits take over where once price alone used to determine. The trend towards healthier eating has caused a growth in premium sugars online sales while local artisans and small-scale producers use social media websites and online marketplaces to sell their products directly to consumers," according to the report.

Knowledge Sourcing Intelligence expects that in the next phase of e-commerce evolution in the Philippines, there will be a continued surge of more sugar producers going digital to increase their market visibility and reach. Such change, it said, does not only help small-scale farmers and local brands compete with big corporations but also fosters a more diversified marketplace for unique sugar products from consumers.

The report expects the Philippine sugar market to grow at a compound annual growth of 3.97 percent from \$4.103 billion in 2025 to \$4.984 billion in 2030.

But then again, any growth, which the market for Philippine sugar will depend to a large extent on the availability of sugar for the food and beverage sector and for other local consumers.

A report by Statista showed that in the 2022/23 marketing year alone, the Philippines imported about 730,400 metric tons of refined sugar, which is more than 200 percent higher than in the previous year to meet the domestic demand at a time of low production output. In 2023, total supply of raw sugar in the country amounted to 1.94 million metric tons, a decrease from the previous year, while consumption totalled 2.2 million tons of sugar that year.

While the government already expects production to significantly drop during the current crop year, it nevertheless maintains that the country still has ample stocks and retail prices have remained stable.

With the government deciding to defer any sugar importation plans until the middle of this year or after the May elections, consumers and businesses that heavily use sugar have become jittery since an increase in prices has become inevitable and planning ahead has become difficult if not impossible.

Remember when sugar prices reached as much as P120 per kilo just because imports were delayed and our government failed to act fast enough?

We don't want to worsen inflation any further. It is best for our government to be proactive and to be prepared as any delay in sugar imports could lead to a supply shortage. Buying at short notice would naturally result in higher buying prices for the users and importers, which we do not want to happen.

It is crucial for the Department of Agriculture to immediately commence the importation of sugar and not wait until after the end of the crop season in mid-2025. Timely imports can help stabilize the market, preventing disruptions in businesses dependent on sugar and ensuring there is ample supply even during peak consumption periods.

For comments, email at maryannreyesphilstar@gmail.com

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/02/02/2418479/unnecessary-delay>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

How PLDT-Smart digital program empowered farming venture of former employee

The Philippine Star

February 2, 2025 | 12:00am



Equipped with the FarmTech kit, Wilmar Ompoc and the Sto. Nino Rice Farmers Association help empower fellow farmers on digital farming practices.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — In 2011, former corporate employee Wilmar Ompoc from Bukidnon decided to make farming his source of livelihood, developing a piece of land from his in-laws. Without prior exposure to agriculture, Ompoc initially faced numerous challenges. However, through training sessions, Ompoc is now the producer of various commodities including corn, vegetables, rice, coconut and livestock.

One such training session was through the Digital Farmers Program (DFP) offered by PLDT, Smart Communications Inc. and the Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Training Institute Region 10 (DA-ATI 10), where Ompoc discovered how technology could simplify farming tasks and improve their yield. Launched in 2019 with DA-ATI, the DFP is part of PLDT and Smart's efforts to promote inclusive technologies that enhance livelihood opportunities for farmers nationwide.

The program has also been beneficial to the Sto. Niño Organic Rice Farmers Association (SNORFA) based in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, of which Ompoc serves as president and technology trainer. Under the DFP, SNORFA also recently received a FarmTech training kit from DA-ATI 10, PLDT and Smart.

A key component of the DFP, FarmTech empowers farmer associations to educate more farmers on digital applications for agriculture. It is an all-in-one training kit designed to enhance digital literacy among farmer groups and agri-coops in remote areas. The kit includes a tablet, 10 smartphones, a SmartBro pocket WiFi with Smart Prepaid load cards, an outdoor projector and screen, a rechargeable

portable sound system, a flash drive with multimedia resources and apps, and DA-ATI-developed learning materials.

Aside from SNORFA in Bukidnon, FarmTech packages have also been turned over to groups in Buluan, Maguindanao del Sur and Digos, Davao del Sur.

“Transporting training equipment to farming communities used to be challenging. With the FarmTech kit’s portable and rechargeable projector, sound system, and other tools, training our fellow farmers on digital tools will be significantly easier. I am very thankful to DA-ATI for the DFP trainings and to PLDT and Smart for providing us with the FarmTech kit,” Ompoc said.

With the expansion of their integrated fixed and wireless networks across the country, PLDT and Smart’s efforts to boost the digital economy highlight the group’s support for the government’s overall digitalization thrust. This also emphasizes their commitment to helping achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal No. 1 (No Poverty) and Goal No. 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/02/02/2418483/how-pldt-smart-digital-program-empowered-farming-venture-former-employee>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Harvest to salvage thin red onion stocks

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

February 2, 2025 | 12:00am



Red onions stored in cold storages nationwide as of Jan. 17 were estimated at around 8,500 metric tons while yellow onion stocks stood at 1,628.4 MT, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).
STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The country's current onion stocks are projected to last until this week but harvest is expected to begin soon that would lift nationwide supplies to tide over the first quarter.

Red onions stored in cold storages nationwide as of Jan. 17 were estimated at around 8,500 metric tons while yellow onion stocks stood at 1,628.4 MT, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

The BPI estimated that red onion supplies would only last until Feb. 1 while yellow onion stocks would be depleted within the week, based on the country's average daily consumption of the spices.

But the BPI projected that newly harvested stocks are expected to be stored this quarter.

The agency estimated that about 40,334 MT of locally produced red onions would be in cold storage until the end of March. The projected additional stocks would ensure that the country would have red onions for at least 83 days or until April 10, according to the BPI.

For yellow onions, around 19,450 MT are expected to be produced and be in cold storages within the quarter. Furthermore, the BPI projected that about 2,514 MT of imported yellow onions were expected to arrive as of Jan. 16.

In total, the BPI projected that the country's yellow onion stocks would last for 161 days or until June 27.

The drop in red onion stocks could be attributed to some traders unloading more supplies last month because of the fear that they would spoil or sprout new bulbs as they are stored beyond six months already, according to industry sources.

They noted that onions could only be stored for up to six months. The red onion industry faced an unfamiliar logistical concern last year since the country had more than enough stocks to meet its demand for the first time in recent history due to bumper harvest.

This, sources said, posed storage concerns for traders as some of the stocks could be staying in cold storages longer than ideal duration.

This was evident in the initial supply and demand projections made by the BPI earlier last year that red onion stocks of the country would even last until the middle of March this year.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) did not permit any red onion importation last year due to ample stocks that kept retail prices of the commodity relatively stable throughout the year at a price range of P70 to P150 per kilo.

However, retail prices of red onions have slowly increased at the start of this year with the latest price monitoring report by the DA showing that the spice is now ranging between P140 and P200 per kilo in Metro Manila markets.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/02/02/2418484/harvest-salvage-thin-red-onion-stocks>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA taking steps to prevent egg shortage, price surge

Christine Boton - The Philippine Star

February 2, 2025 | 12:00am



Workers are seen arranging eggs for sale at Blumentritt Market in Manila on June 28, 2024.
STAR / Edd Gumban

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is implementing urgent measures to prevent a possible egg shortage and price surge in the country as the global bird flu crisis threatens poultry supply chains.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. announced on Friday that the agency is taking proactive steps to stabilize production and ensure food security in the coming months.

The initiative is in response to concerns over last year's industry losses and fears of a crisis similar to the United States, where currently, a severe bird flu outbreak has led to the culling of millions of egg-laying chickens.

While the Philippines has not yet experienced a widespread outbreak, Tiu Laurel warned that the country could face an egg supply shortage as early as April.

In 2024, oversupply and weak demand forced many local poultry farmers to cull their layers, significantly reducing the number of egg-laying hens. This has raised concerns about a possible shortfall in production, which could drive prices up in the coming months.

To address the issue, the DA is expediting the importation of egg-laying chickens and pushing for the immediate approval of avian influenza vaccines by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The agency is also working to secure P300 million in funding from the National Livestock Program for vaccine testing, with the possibility of mass inoculation starting as early as March.

"We still have time, so there is a chance we could avert this," Laurel said, emphasizing the importance of financial support from institutions such as LandBank and the Development Bank of the Philippines to help poultry farmers repopulate their flocks.

The DA's response aims to stabilize egg production, protect consumers from sudden price hikes and maintain food security amid the ongoing threat of bird flu.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/02/2418555/da-taking-steps-prevent-egg-shortage-price-surge>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Graduating beneficiaries of 4Ps to get continued support

Jose Rodel Clapano - The Philippine Star

February 2, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Graduating members of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) will continue to receive assistance from the government to prevent them from sliding back to poverty, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary Rex Gatchalian said.

In a message on Friday to the graduating 4Ps beneficiaries who participated in the DSWD's rollout of "Trabaho ng Bagong Pilipinas" job fair at the Rizal Memorial stadium in Manila, Gatchalian said that he received a standing order from President Marcos to ensure that the graduating 4Ps beneficiaries will get livelihood to prevent them from returning to poverty.

"I know that the process is long, but we assure you that the national government continues to monitor to ensure that you will have what you need every day," Gatchalian said.

The Trabaho sa Bagong Pilipinas is an exclusive job fair for 4Ps beneficiaries with 94 employers invited by the Department of Labor and Employment participating.

Also present at the event to provide pre-employment and advisory services were the Department of Trade and Industry, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, Philippine Statistics Authority, National Bureau of Investigation, Philippine National Police, Social Security System, Bureau of Internal Revenue, PhilHealth, Pag-IBIG Fund and the Office of the President.

Kadiwa ng Pangulo stalls were also set up by the Department of Agriculture to provide affordable basic goods and commodities to the beneficiaries.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2025/02/02/2418571/graduating-beneficiaries-4ps-get-continued-support>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Agri chief urges steps to avert egg shortage

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:02 AM February 02, 2025



CHICKEN-AND-EGG SITUATION The Department of Agriculture is expediting the importation of egg-laying hens to boost local production and avert an egg supply shortage in April. —Grig C. Montegrando

MANILA, Philippines — Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. of the Department of Agriculture (DA) said steps must now be taken to avert a possible shortage of eggs in April.

Tiu Laurel recommended measures—like funding support for local egg producers — as he warned of a potential scarcity in two months due to losses from oversupply and lower prices that many of them suffered last year.

“The unfortunate thing is ... there might be a shortage of eggs by April,” Tiu Laurel told reporters on Friday.

“Hopefully, there may be a chance to avert this because it’s only February. [At] least, looking forward, we know there’s a problem and we will act on it,” he added.

Tiu Laurel urged financial institutions such as the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Development Bank of the Philippines to provide funding to support the industry’s repopulation efforts.

“The problem with this shortage is that last year, there was an oversupply of eggs, causing farm-gate prices to drop by P4 per piece. Many suffered losses. Those who incurred losses culled their laying hens to generate cash,” he said.

The DA said this situation “significantly reduced the population of egg-laying hens, potentially impacting future supply.”

The agency, however, does not have existing programs to support those who intentionally or voluntarily slaughtered their chickens to cut their losses.

The DA chief said local poultry raisers need hatching eggs — or incubated fertilized eggs that produce chicks to boost production — as demand has started to increase.

Potential impact

A shortage will not only impact households who rely on eggs for protein but also businesses and industries such as bakeries, restaurants, and food manufacturers. This could force businesses to raise prices or cut production output to cope with the supply shortage.

Tiu Laurel said taking the necessary steps could help avert a crisis similar to the one affecting the United States, where an avian influenza outbreak has led to the culling of millions of egg-laying chickens.

“I just came back from America. There, eggs are sold from \$2.45 to \$4.15 per tray. And in their supermarkets, I no longer see eggs. There’s a limit of one to two trays per individual,” he said.

The DA said it is expediting the importation of egg-laying chickens and pushing for immediate approval by the Food and Drug Administration of avian influenza vaccines.

The agency is also secure that there is a P300-million budget requested by the National Livestock Program to fund vaccine testing, with the possibility of mass inoculation beginning as early as March.

The monitored release of these vaccines, according to Tiu Laurel, will give confidence to the industry.

The Philippines has no positive cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza, based on the Bureau of Animal Industry’s update as of Jan. 24.

“There were no ongoing cases since culling or depopulation and surveillance activities within a 1-kilometer radius in the previously reported cases were completed,” the bureau said.

Bird flu risk

Meanwhile, the Philippine Egg Board Association said a shortage was unlikely and that domestic supply had even increased.

“We don’t see it that way, however, anything can happen. There are so many cases of bird flu in other countries and I hope it doesn’t reach our country,” Peba chair emeritus Gregorio San Diego said in a mix of English and Filipino in a text message.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2030556/agri-chief-urges-steps-to-avert-egg-shortage>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Tobacco exports seen growing with FTAs, removal of non-tariff barriers

February 2, 2025 | 7:40 pm



BW FILE PHOTO

THE PHILIPPINES will need to leverage free trade agreements (FTAs) and address non-tariff barriers to help grow the tobacco industry, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said.

At the International Tobacco Agricultural Summit, Bureau of International Trade Relations Director Marie Sherylyn D. Aquia said FTAs will play a crucial role in strengthening the industry by improving market access.

“FTAs also support legitimate trade and enhanced trade cooperation. FTAs also secure preferential tariffs and clear rules, which can improve the competitiveness of the industry,” she said last week.

“However, it is important to note that global trends are increasingly focused on public health considerations, which may impact the tobacco trade,” she added.

She also cited the need for separate international cooperation efforts to address illicit trade issues.

According to the DTI, the non-tariff barriers faced by the industry include stringent packaging and labeling requirements, import restrictions and quotas, excise taxes and price controls, as well as technical barriers to trade and environmental regulations.

“These measures, while often aimed at public health concerns, can create challenges for our Philippine tobacco exporters,” she said.

Meanwhile, she said that the markets with growth potential for Philippine tobacco exports include Japan, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and the South Korea.

“We do have free trade agreements with all of these countries, but of course, we aim to continue to improve market access for our exports of goods and services,” she said.

“By leveraging FTAs and addressing the non-tariff barriers through various international engagements, the Philippines can continue to enhance its tobacco industry’s position in the global market while navigating the evolving regulatory landscape,” she added.

Exports of unmanufactured tobacco declined 14.2% to 17.8 million kilograms in 2024 and fell 6.5% by value to \$94.59 million, according to the National Tobacco Administration. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/02/02/650481/tobacco-exports-seen-growing-with-ftas-removal-of-non-tariff-barriers/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Additional funding sought for banana industry

February 2, 2025 | 7:37 pm



DA

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said that it is looking for additional funding to support banana production, which continues to be impacted by plant diseases.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said that the DA is seeking the support of Congress to obtain the funding.

“That would definitely help. That’s part of the proposal that we will give,” Mr. Laurel told reporters.

The banana industry has continued to deal with plant diseases like the Fusarium wilt or Panama disease, as well as Black Sigatoka.

He added that smallholder farmers have found it difficult to deal with the plant diseases, prompting about half to stop producing. He said small farms account for about 40% of the industry.

According to the Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association, only 1,000 hectares out of the 89,000 hectares of land available for banana cultivation continued to be operational.

Fusarium wilt is a soil-borne fungal disease that blocks the banana plant’s vascular system and deprives it of minerals, nutrients, and moisture. Affected plants turn yellow and die.

The Tropical Race 4 (TR4) strain of fusarium wilt was first detected in Davao City in 2009 and continues to threaten the Cavendish banana, the main export variety.

Black Sigatoka is also a fungal disease that affects banana leaves, causing them to turn black and die.

On the other hand, he said corporate plantations have been able to cope with the fungal diseases.

“They have protocols in case of infestation. There are certain things that they do, like cutting immediately, to treating the soil, replanting, and adding tea tree oil to prevent the disease,” Mr. Laurel added.

He said smallhold farmers could receive training in disease containment from the DA's High Value Crop office.

"We have to train the smallholder farmers, and they can apply the techniques of the corporate farmers to return to the industry," he added.

The Philippines has recently fallen to fourth place among the top banana exporters, as the industry continues to deal with TR4, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization.

According to preliminary data, exports of Philippine bananas dropped to 2.28 million metric tons in 2024.

— **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/02/02/650478/additional-funding-sought-for-banana-industry/>

REMATE:

Food security declaration lilimitahan sa lugar na may ‘extraordinary prices’ ng bigas

February 2, 2025 09:31



MANILA, Philippines – Lilimitahan lamang sa mga lugar na nakararanas ng mataas na presyo ng bigas ang deklarasyon ng food security, nilinaw ng Department of Agriculture (DA) nitong Sabado, Pebrero 1.

Ayon kay DA Spokesperson Asec. Arnel de Mesa, ang emergency declaration ay batay sa Republic Act (RA) 12078, na nag-aamya sa Rice Tariffication Law.

“Base kasi sa RA 12078 ay mag-intervene tayo doon sa mga lugar na may matataas, o nararanasan yung extraordinary presyo ng bigas so doon lang din mag-iintervene ang NFA ... Kung mababa naman yung presyo sa ganitong lugar, di naman yun tinitignan,” ani De Mesa sa panayam ng Radyo 630.

Ang batas ay nagbibigay ng kapangyarihan sa agriculture secretary na magdeklara ng food security emergencies sa mga lugar na may shortage sa suplay ng pagkain o mataas na presyo nito.

Nitong Biyernes, sinabi ni DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na ang pamahalaan ay maaaring magdeklara ng rice emergency sa Martes kasunod ng paglalabas ng National Price Coordinating Council ng resolusyon na irekomenda ang emergency dahil sa “extraordinary increase” sa presyo ng bigas.

Sa ngayon ay sinusuri pa nila ang pinal na desisyon ng mga lugar na maaapektuhan ng deklarasyon.

“Ang pangunahing una na titignan, yung mga key cities at metropolitan areas natin,” dagdag ni De Mesa.

Sa ilalim ng rice emergency declaration, ang rice stocks ng National Food Authority (NFA) ay ibebenta sa mga ahensya ng pamahalaan at local government units ng P36 kadakilo at sa mga consumer ng P38 kada kilo.

Nauna nang siniguro ni Laurel sa publiko na ang NFA ay mayroong 300,000 tonelada ng stock na handang ilabas.

Ang mga stock ng bigas na ito ay may maayos umanong kalidad, well-maintained at visually appealing. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/food-security-declaration-lilimitahan-sa-lugar-na-may-extraordinary-prices-ng-bigas/>

REMATE:

Banta ng bird flu sa presyo ng itlog, aagapan ng DA

February 2, 2025 08:39



MANILA, Philippines – Inanunsyo ng Department of Agriculture (DA) nitong Sabado, Pebrero 1 na gumagawa na ito ng mga hakbang para panatilihin ang presyo ng itlog at labanan ang posibleng taas-presyo dahil sa bird flu.

Sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na nagdulot ng matinding pagtaas sa presyo ng itlog ang bird flu outbreak sa US.

Bagamat wala pang nararanasan na outbreak sa bird flu dito sa Pilipinas, posibleng makaranas umano ng shortage sa suplay ng itlog pagsapit ng Abril.

“Ang problema dito sa shortage na ito is because last year naman, sobrang raming itlog na bumagsak ang presyo sa farmgate ng P4 bawat piraso. Maraming nalugi. Yung mga nalugi naman, kinatay nila yung mga layers nila para magkaroon ng cash,” paliwanag ni Laurel.

Para tugunan ito ay pinabilis na ng DA ang importation ng egg-laying chickens at nakikipagtulungan na sa Food and Drug Administration (FDA) para makakuha ng approval para sa avian influenza vaccine.

“Ang pinakamalaking tulong na mabibigay ng DA sa industriya is to facilitate yung kanilang pagi-import ng mga bagong layers into the country, ma fast track yan,” ayon pa sa Agriculture Secretary.

“May chance pa naman ma avert itong sinasabi ko sa Abril dahil Pebrero pa lang naman. But at least, looking forward, there is a problem, and we will act on it.”

Sa kabila nito, pinawi naman ng Philippine Egg Board Association (PEBA) ang pangamba sa shortage at sinabi na nananatiling stable ang suplay nito hangga’t hindi mangyayari ang major bird flu outbreak.

“Ang projection po natin itong taon is meron tayong ine-expect na over supply sa production po ng itlog,” pahayag ni PEBA President Francis Uyehara.

“Yung mga dumating na parent stock last year, ngayon po magsisimula yon maging productive. [Pero], kung magkaroon ng outbreak magkakaproblema po tayo sa supply po ng itlog.” *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/banta-ng-bird-flu-sa-presyo-ng-itlog-aagapan-ng-da/>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Fishers groups see better marine resource management under new BFAR chief

By **Franco Jose C Baroña**

February 2, 2025

MANILA, Philippines — The appointment of Elizer Salilig as director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has raised optimism among fisherfolk cooperatives and local government units (LGUs), who anticipate stronger policies to enhance marine resource management, support small-scale fishers, and boost economic opportunities in coastal communities.

Salilig, a seasoned fisheries official with 34 years of experience, was appointed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and sworn in by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel last January 24.

Salilig's past work has earned the trust of fisherfolk leaders and local officials. Juliet Gutierrez, president of Samaka Sablayan, a coalition of over 20 fisherfolk cooperatives, highlighted Salilig's role in organizing women's cooperatives in MIMAROPA (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan) to empower municipal fishing communities.

"Director Salilig worked closely with us to organize women's cooperatives in MIMAROPA. He understands the struggles of small-scale fishers and has always pushed for more inclusive programs," Gutierrez said.

She noted that his hands-on approach in working with small-scale fishers has strengthened cooperative structures and improved local livelihood programs.

Geraldo Abello, chairman of the Dahilican Roxas Fishermen Cooperative, credited Salilig with encouraging fishers in Oriental Mindoro to diversify their livelihood.

Abello recalled how Salilig helped them explore opportunities beyond fishing by introducing entrepreneurship programs that allowed fisherfolk to engage in processing and marketing their catch, providing them with more financial stability.

"He helped us realize that we don't have to rely solely on our daily catch. Because of his support, many of us have started small businesses like fish processing and marketing," Abello said.

Local government leaders also voiced their optimism about Salilig's leadership. Bongabong Mayor Elegio Malaluan, president of the League of Mayors of Oriental Mindoro, recalled his tenure as BFAR-MIMAROPA regional director, where he improved coordination between LGUs and BFAR in enforcing fisheries laws.

"During his time as regional director, he made sure local governments had a clear role in enforcing fisheries laws. He helped settle disputes between commercial and municipal fishers, ensuring that our coastal resources were well-managed," Malaluan said of Salilig.

Malaluan expressed confidence that the new BFAR chief's leadership would strengthen the agency's collaboration with LGUs, particularly in managing coastal resources and addressing illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. He added that Salilig's deep understanding of fisheries policies would be instrumental in resolving long-standing conflicts between small-scale and commercial fishers.

Salilig underscored the agency's crucial role in national food security and economic resilience. He stressed that the fisheries sector is an essential pillar of the country's food supply chain and economy.

Among his priorities include strengthening aquaculture to stabilize the country's fish supply, promoting sustainable fishing practices to combat the effects of climate change, and enhancing research and development through collaborations with government agencies and academic institutions.

He also emphasized the need to integrate fisherfolk into value chains beyond fishing, providing them with more opportunities in processing, marketing, and other fisheries-related businesses.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/02/news/fishers-groups-see-better-marine-resource-management-under-new-bfar-chief/2048409>