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MANILA BULLETIN:

Fishers' group blasts DA's planned fish importation

BY JEL SANTOS

Feb 23, 2025 06:12 PM



(JEL SANTOS/MB FILE PHOTO)

A progressive fishers' group has criticized the Department of Agriculture (DA) for its planned importation of 25,000 metric tons (MT) of fish, warning that the move would be detrimental to local fisherfolk.

The DA has earlier approved the importation of 25,000 metric tons (MT) of frozen fish and seafood to "maintain a steady food supply and curb price hikes."

As stated in Memorandum Order No. 12, signed by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., the importation will be allowed from March 1 to May 30.

Despite the DA's justification, Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) argues that the proposed importation would drive down fish prices in the country, further hurting the already struggling local fishing industry.

"Labis na nalulugi ang mga mangingisda sa pagdagsa ng mga imported na isda sa lokal na pamilihan. Dahil sa importasyon, lalong bumabagsak ang presyo ng huli ng mga mangingisda (Due to the influx of imported fish, domestic fishers lose profit. The catch of local fishers further declines because of importation)," Pamalakaya Chairperson Fernando Hicap said.

Hicap argued that the DA's planned importation is unjustifiable, emphasizing that there are sufficient alternative fish species available in local markets.

He noted that instead of lowering fish prices, the importation would benefit private traders who control the market.

"Halimbawa sa Zambales, naglalaro lamang sa P100-P120 kada kilo ang farm gate price ng galunggong. Pinangangambahang lalo pang bumagsak ito sa pagpasok ng mga inangkat na isda na bagsak-presyo pero bilasa (For example, in Zambales, the farm gate price of galunggong (round scad) is only around

P100-P120 per kilo. There are concerns that this price will drop even further with the entry of imported fish, which are cheap but not fresh),” he added.

Hicap also stressed that importation does not necessarily result in lower fish prices for consumers, as private traders ultimately control the market.

He further accused the DA of favoring the commercial fishing sector, which he claimed is “directly involved” in the importation scheme, while leaving small-scale fishers neglected and their production crippled.

“Malinaw na pumapabor ang DA sa sektor ng commercial fishing na sangkot mismo sa importasyon, habang lubhang pinabayaan at nilumpo ang produksyon ng maliliit na mangingisda (It is clear that the DA is favoring the commercial fishing sector, which is directly involved in the importation, while severely neglecting and crippling the production of small-scale fishers),” he added.

Pamalakaya said that under the administration of President Marcos, the DA has already imported over 80,000 metric tons of fish, mainly galunggong and other pelagic species.

The group said that it will conduct nationwide consultations with its local chapters to assess the impact of the impending importation and organize protest actions demanding greater support for local fisheries production.



(JEL SANTOS/MB FILE PHOTO)

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https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/23/fishers-group-blasts-da-s-planned-fish-importation#google_vignette

MANILA BULLETIN:

Quezon City solon cites P500-M bump in Calamity Fund this year

BY ELLSON QUISMORIO

Feb 23, 2025 02:39 PM

AT A GLANCE

- The 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA) or national budget features an additional P500 million worth of Calamity Fund, which would do a long way in terms of improving the country's disaster preparedness and long-term climate resilience.



(Unsplash)

The 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA) or national budget features an additional P500 million worth of Calamity Fund, which would do a long way in terms of improving the country's disaster preparedness and long-term climate resilience.

Thus, said Quezon 4th district Rep. Marvin Rillo, who worked in the 19th Congress as member of the House Committee on Appropriations.

“In the 2025 General Appropriations [Act], we earmarked P21 billion for the Calamity Fund. This is P500 million more than the P20.5 billion allocated in 2024,” Rillo said in a statement Sunday, Feb. 23. “Our goal is to ensure that government agencies are well-equipped to respond to disasters, enabling faster recovery and continuity of essential services,” he added.

Rillo outlined the distribution of the P21 billion Calamity Fund, also known as the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund:

- P10.7 billion for aid, relief, and rehabilitation services in calamity-affected communities, including the training of personnel and other pre-disaster activities.
- P9.3 billion in capital outlays, primarily for the repair and reconstruction of damaged permanent structures.
- P1 billion for the People’s Survival Fund, supporting adaptation projects and initiatives led by local government units and community organizations.

Additionally, Rillo detailed the 2025 Quick Response Fund (QRF) allocations for various government agencies to support disaster operations and rehabilitation efforts:

- Department of Education - P3 billion
- Department of Social Welfare and Development - P1.25 billion
- Department of Agriculture - P1 billion
- Department of Public Works and Highways - P1 billion
- Department of Health - P500 million
- Department of National Defense-Office of Civil Defense - P500 million
- National Irrigation Administration - P300 million

- Department of Transportation-Philippine Coast Guard - P75 million
- Department of the Interior and Local Government - P50 million each for the Philippine National Police and the Bureau of Fire Protection

According to the World Risk Index 2024, the Philippines ranks as the world's most disaster-prone country.

Situated in the northwestern Pacific Ocean's typhoon belt, the Philippines experiences an average of 20 storms annually.

The Philippines also sits along the Pacific Ring of Fire, making it highly vulnerable to volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.

The other countries ranked second to tenth in the global risk index include Indonesia, India, Colombia, Mexico, Myanmar, Mozambique, Russia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.



(Unsplash)

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<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/23/quezon-city-solon-cites-p500-m-bump-in-calamity-fund-this-year>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Meat imports surge to new high in 2024

Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas - The Philippine Star

February 23, 2025 | 12:00am



A customer looks at pork cuts at a meat stall in a Manila public market.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The country's meat imports rose to a record high of 1.45 million metric tons (MT) in 2024, driven by higher pork and chicken meat purchases abroad, according to the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI).

Meat purchases abroad last year rose by 20 percent from the 1.204 million MT in 2023.

The total meat import volume last year eclipsed the previous record high of 1.36 million MT recorded in 2022 by 6.6 percent, BAI data showed.

Pork imports, which accounted for half of the total meat import volume, rose by 24 percent to 733,729 MT last year from 591,888 MT in 2023.

It was followed by chicken meat imports which rose by 10 percent to 472,211 MT from 426,619 MT. Chicken meat imports accounted for 33 percent of the country's total meat imports.

BAI data also showed that beef imports expanded by 40 percent year-on-year to 203,898 MT from 145,002 MT. Turkey meat imports also nearly doubled to 1,345 MT from 698 MT.

Meanwhile, the country's imports of buffalo meat, duck meat and lamb meat all declined on an annual basis last year. Buffalo meat imports fell by three percent to 37,795 MT while duck meat imports declined by 27 percent to 221 MT.

Lamb meat imports decreased by 10 percent to 653 MT in 2024 from 727 MT in 2023.

Industry players have attributed the increase in meat imports last year to the need to augment domestic stocks to prevent a spike in retail prices of certain meat items, particularly pork.

The Department of Agriculture earlier said that meat imports, particularly pork, tempered the possible rise in retail prices due to the decimation of domestic hog inventory from continued devastation and threats of African swine fever.

The top five sources of meat imports last year were Brazil (536,340 MT), the United States (220,132 MT), Spain (176,273 MT), Canada (116,700 MT) and Australia (75,245 MT).

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/02/23/2423448/meat-imports-surge-new-high-2024>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

‘Lowering prices of essential goods a top priority’

[Jose Rodel Clapano](#) - The Philippine Star

February 23, 2025 | 12:00am



“When prices of essential goods are high, each Filipino (is) directly affected. As public servant, it is our obligation to ensure that enough and affordable food goes on the table of each Filipino,” he said in a statement, reacting to a Moody’s Analytics report identifying inflation as still the foremost risk to the Philippine economy.

STAR / Miguel De Guzman

MANILA, Philippines — Bringing down prices of essential goods remains the top priority of the Marcos administration, House Speaker Martin Romualdez said yesterday.

“When prices of essential goods are high, each Filipino (is) directly affected. As public servant, it is our obligation to ensure that enough and affordable food goes on the table of each Filipino,” he said in a statement, reacting to a Moody’s Analytics report identifying inflation as still the foremost risk to the Philippine economy.

According to Romualdez, latest economic data indicate that while inflation eased to 2.9 percent in January 2025, food inflation rose to four percent, reflecting the country’s supply chain vulnerabilities. As per Moody’s Analytics, external factors such as global trade frictions and domestic challenges – including typhoon damage to agricultural production – keep inflation risks elevated.

In response, Romualdez underscored the need for a dual approach: maintaining sound monetary policy while taking decisive action to bolster domestic production.

“Addressing inflation is not only the job of the Central Bank. This should be supported with intelligent supervision of food supply and other basic commodities,” he said.

“Our objective is to ensure that prices will not go down and go up without direction. We need to strengthen our food supply and make it predictable,” he added.

One of the government’s immediate responses to food price volatility is the Department of Agriculture (DA)’s finalization of a 55,000 metric ton minimum access volume (MAV) quota for pork imports.

This measure aims to stabilize pork prices and ensure sufficient supply. Under this quota, 30,000 metric tons are allocated to meat processors, 10,000 metric tons to traders and 15,000 metric tons to the DA for price stabilization. Tariffs remain at 15 percent within the quota and 25 percent beyond it.

However, Romualdez stressed that while importation can address short-term shortages, long-term food security depends on boosting domestic agricultural production.

“We need to invest in modernization of our agriculture, from strengthening biosecurity measures in hog-raising to improving the supply of food of our livestock farmers. We will remain dependent on importation if we will not fix the root cause of the problem,” he said.

Romualdez noted that efforts to strengthen local production are already underway.

In La Union and Pangasinan, Romualdez said 32 farmers’ cooperatives and local government units recently received 35 agricultural machines worth P71.6 million under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund Mechanization Program.

With the program’s second phase set to receive an increased P9-billion annual budget, Romualdez expressed confidence that improved mechanization will translate to higher yields and lower food costs. “Distribution of machines is not enough. We need to ensure that our farmers have enough knowledge and support so that they can maximize the proper use of technology. If we were able to strengthen our agriculture, we will reduce the independence on imported food and we will have a more stronger economy,” Romualdez said.

Romualdez stressed that market data also reflect mixed price movements in staple goods.

The average retail price of rice slightly declined to P54.18 per kilo in early February, with regular-milled rice experiencing a decrease while special rice seeing a marginal increase.

Meanwhile, meat prices – including fresh pork shoulder – rose compared to the previous month.

Romualdez pointed out that fluctuating prices in essential goods highlight the urgency of reinforcing local supply chains and developing long-term market stabilization programs.

“We need to change our way of addressing the prices of goods, not only reactive to the increases in pricess. The solution is strengthened production, efficient chain of supply and fair competiton in the market. We need to ensure that each Filipino has access to quality and affordable food,” he said.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/23/2423500/lowering-prices-essential-goods-top-priority>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Import permit process for non-sugar sweeteners to be streamlined

February 23, 2025 | 8:29 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

THE Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said it will revise the rules for importing sugar alternatives which will reduce red tape, later facilitated further by the use of an online portal.

The streamlining follows consultations with users, which surfaced concerns over bureaucratic inefficiencies. Users had lobbied against plans to impose new import clearance fees for some non-sugar sweeteners.

“We listened to their concerns. Their most basic concern is delay, red tape,” Administrator Pablo Luis S. Azcona told reporters at the SRA Research Facility in La Carlota, Negros Occidental.

Mr. Azcona told *BusinessWorld* during a visit to a sugar mill that it takes three to five working days for the SRA to issue import clearances.

“We will include in the sugar order that if the SRA still has no response after five working days, the application is deemed approved,” he said.

He said the SRA is set to issue the order in March.

The SRA in late January decided to postpone the effectivity of Sugar Order (SO) No. 6, which sought to impose a P60 per metric ton clearance fee on imported sweeteners covered by tariff codes 1701, 1702 and 1704.

These include sucrose, lactose, glucose, maltose, maple syrup, honey and caramel, and flavored syrups.

Food and beverage manufacturers, industry associations and chambers of commerce have cited the order’s potential impact on confectionery and beverage prices.

They also called on the SRA to conduct a Regulatory Impact Assessment before any policy changes, and urged it to adopt the Anti-Red Tape Authority’s ease of doing business framework, which sets timelines for approving permits based on the complexity of the transaction, and deems as approved those applications for which processing exceeds the prescribed timelines.

Mr. Azcona said the new rules will allow prospective importers to present a sales invoice from the supplier to kick off the application process.

The SRA will also require a soft copy of the bill of lading or the contract between a carrier and a shipper to issue the import clearance, he added.

“Since our import clearances is on a per bill of lading basis, sometimes there is a delay in the BL. It takes a few days for the BL to come out. So, we agreed. They can apply using their invoices first,” he said.

The idea is to “get the process going,” he added. “And then finalize once the BL is there.”

Mr. Azcona said the SRA is in the process of developing an online portal for importers.

He did not comment on whether the proposed fee will still be imposed.

Consultations are expected to conclude in time for the new rules to go into force by March. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/02/23/655067/import-permit-process-for-non-sugar-sweeteners-to-be-streamlined/>

REMATE:

Kadiwa program pinalawig sa police, military camps

February 23, 2025 12:00



MANILA, Philippines- Nakipagtulungan ang Department of Agriculture (DA) sa Philippine National Police (PNP) at sa Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) upang palawigin ang Kadiwa ng Pangulo (KNP) program, para tiyakin ang mas malawak na access sa abot-kayang bilihan.

Sa hiwalay na events nitong Biyernes, pinangunahan ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel ang paglulunsad ng KNP stores sa PNP headquarters sa Camp Crame at sa AFP headquarters sa Camp Aguinaldo.

Base sa DA, magtatalaga ng mas maraming Kadiwa stores sa mga piling police at military camps sa buong bansa.

Target ng programa ang nasa 228,000 PNP personnel, 150,000 AFP members, at mga kalapit na komunidad.

Itinatag sa ilalim ng Marcos administration, bahagi ang KNP ng pagsisikap ng pamahalaan na bigyan ang mga magsasaka at mangingisda ng direktang access sa mga espasyo kung saan nila direktang maibebenta ang kanilang mga ani sa mga konsyumer.

“This program embodies the government’s commitment to inclusive development and food security...This setup not only allows farmers and fisherfolk to earn better prices for their hard work, but also ensures that the quality products reach the consumers at an affordable cost,” bahagi ng talumpati ni Laurel sa Camp Crame.

“It’s a win-win solution for both sectors, paving the way for a more equitable and sustainable agriculture economy,” dagdag niya.

“The collaboration highlights a spirit of bayanihan that drives this program forward.”

Pinuri naman ni AFP Chief of Staff General Romeo Brawner Jr. ang pagsisikap ng DA, binigyang-diin na magresulta ang pagiging food-secure sa mas matatag na bansa.

Samantala, sinabi ni PNP Chief Police General Rommel Marbil na patunay ang pagpapalawig ng KNP ng commitment ni Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. sa kapakanan ng uniformed personnel. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/kadiwa-program-pinalawig-sa-police-military-camps/>

ABANTE:

Import quota sinusugan: Laurel nirendahan presyo ng baboy

Abante News

• February 23, 2025



Babaguhin ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang minimum access volume (MAV) quota sa inaangkat na pork bilang bahagi ng hakbang na makontrol ang presyo ng baboy sa pamilihan.

Sa isang statement nitong Linggo, binanggit ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na ang direksiyon ng ahensiya ay maglaan ng 30,000 tonelada sa meat processors, upang makontrol ang presyo sa merkado matapos sumirit ang karneng baboy sa P400 bawat kilo.

Nilinaw naman ni Tiu Laurel na ang alokasyon ay ipipinalisa pa sa mga susunod na linggo.

Ang magiging alokasyon ng inaangkat na baboy ay 30,000 tonelada sa meat processor, 15,000 tonelada sa Food Terminal Inc. (FTI) o Planters Products Inc. at ang natitirang 10,000 tonelada ay hahatiin ng mga trader.

Sa ilalim ng Executive Order 50, ang pork imports na nasa MAV quota ay pinapatawan ng mas mababang tariff na 15% kumpara sa standard na 25%. Ang lalagpas sa quota ay papatawan ng standard rate.

Nauna rito, sumulat ang Meat Importers and Traders Association (MITA) kay Secretary Tiu Laurel at nababahala sa delay ng ilalabas na MAV quota.

Ikinatuwa naman ng Philippine Association of Meat Processors Inc., ang pagtataas ng alokasyon sa mga meat processor dahil makontrol nito ang presyo ng mga processed food tulad ng hotdog at mga de-latang pagkain.

Tumaas ang presyo ng karne ng baboy sa Pilipinas dahil sa epekto ng pananalasa ng African Swine Fever.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/02/23/import-quota-sinusugan-laurel-nirendahan-presyo-ng-baboy/>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Cebu fisherfolk given ice block machine

By Giselle P. Jordan

February 23, 2025

THE Department of Agriculture-Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (DA-PHilMech) has turned over a solar-powered ice block machine to fisherfolk in Pilar, Cebu, for cost-efficient ice supply and better preservation of fish and other marine products.

In the DA's recent multiyear budget planning session, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. noted the importance of ice plants for fishing communities.

"Building ice plants will extend the shelf life of agricultural products, especially fish," he said. "With proper icing, fish can remain fresh for up to seven days, allowing fishermen to transport their catch to markets where demand is higher."

With the new project, PHilMech aims to provide cost-efficient and sustainable ice supply for better preservation of fish and other goods, which would in turn boost productivity.

Being solar-powered, the machine also entails eco-friendly solutions and reduced operating costs for providing ice supply, Tiu Laurel said.

The ice block machine produces 30 5-kilogram ice blocks per cycle, giving a total of 150 kilograms of ice per cycle. It can produce ice up to four times a day, has a stainless steel frame, dual compressors compatible with single-phase electric motors, direct-contact cooling and an eco-friendly refrigerant.

The entire ice production mechanism costs P3.9 million and includes solar panels, a rack system, hybrid inverter power plant, two sets of batteries, a water filtration system, a container-type ice block system, a stainless-steel ice block crusher, a steel-door chest freezer and plastic fish crates for storage.

Pilar Mayor Manuel Santiago thanked DA-PHilMech and said the ice plants would help boost their fish productivity.

With a stable ice supply, fisherfolk can ensure that their products remain fresh as it reaches the market, he said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/23/regions/cebu-fisherfolk-given-ice-block-machine/2060678>