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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Mayor: Toledo City open to businesses

Perales faces case filed by real estate developer before Ombudsman

BY [CALVIN CORDOVA](#)

Feb 26, 2025 08:55 PM

CEBU CITY – Toledo City is open to businesses and development as long as requirements are complied. Toledo City Mayor Joie Perales emphasized this after a case was filed against her before the Office of the Ombudsman for allegedly not acting on the application for reclassification of land in Barangay Tubod, Toledo.

Perales denied the allegation against her, saying it was the Department of Agriculture-Central Visayas (DA-7) that denied the application of real estate developer Il Grande Home Development Corp.



## **PERALES**

The case against Perales and Vice Mayor Jay Sigue was filed by Vivian Mendrez, an official of the Il Grande who is running for councilor with the opposition slate.

Perales disclosed that the company applied for a fencing permit and locational clearance on Sept. 1, 2021, which the city approved and released on Sept. 8.

In September that year, the developer also applied for a fencing permit and locational clearance to fence off another phase of its development works which the city approved and released on Oct. 6, 2021.

According to the records at the City Planning and Development Office, the developer went back to the city government on May 8, 2023 to apply for clearance and zoning certificate. In this process, especially since it involved converting agricultural lands to residential use, the DA-7 must be involved as the national agency also has its own list of requirements for the reclassification of land.

The city also wrote to the DA-7 asking for a certificate of no objection. In its August 2023 reply, the DA-7 stated that the developer needs to comply with their set of requirements pursuant to DA Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 26, Series of 2022, which is based on several laws, such as MC No. 54, Series of 1993, “Prescribing the Guidelines Governing Section 20 of RA 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991, authorizing Cities and Municipalities to Reclassify Agricultural Lands into None Agricultural Uses,” before they could act on the application.

The City Council spearheaded by Sigue approved a resolution on Jan. 30, 2024 backing the developer’s application before the DA, stating that they have no objection to the residential development project.

Upon completion of the requirements, the city government, on behalf of Il Grande, submitted these to the DA on Feb. 23, 2024.

The city later made a follow-up about the matter, but it was not until Sept. 9, 2024 that DA personnel visited Toledo to inspect the agricultural land that is subject for application for reclassification.

After they did not receive any communication from the DA, Perales wrote the agency's regional office to inquire about the progress of the application.

The city was shown a copy of the decision dated Nov. 25, 2024, signed by DA-7 Regional Director Angel C. Enriquez that the application was denied.

In its complaint, Il Grande stated: "As of this date, complainant and their staff kept on going back to the Office of the City Mayor, Office of the City Vice Mayor, and the respective offices of the Sangguniang Panlungsod to seek assistance and clarification on the matter, as to why their request for the issuance of a zoning certificate and variance report was never granted...the complainant is simply passed around...without valid reason for their non-action."

However, the city, in a letter to Il Grande dated Jan. 21, 2025, informed the developer of the DA's denial of its application, as the agency highlighted the lot's high potential for agricultural productivity.

Attached to the letter from the City Planning and Development Coordinator were documents that provided explanation, "as assessed and evaluated by the DA." This letter was signed and received by Il Grande on Jan. 22, 2025.

Perales pointed out that the accusations against her contradicts what her administration is trying to achieve. "This administration advocates business-friendliness but we have requirements. We just have to comply. In fact, there are residential housing projects that have already started in the city. We are working hard to have developments in the city because this is for the good of the people. Good developments in Toledo are very welcome," Perales said.

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<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/26/mayor-toledo-city-open-to-businesses>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Immediate implementation of Negros Island Region Act a must--Alvarez

BY [JOSEPH PEDRAJAS](#)

Feb 26, 2025 01:39 PM

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## AT A GLANCE

- Negros Occidental 6th district Rep. Mercedes Alvarez is pushing for the timely implementation of the measure that will facilitate the establishment of government facilities closer to Negros Island communities--something that is deemed crucial for the island's economic progress.

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A lawmaker is pushing for the timely implementation of the measure that will facilitate the establishment of government facilities closer to Negros Island communities--something that is deemed crucial for the island's economic progress.

Negros Occidental 6th district Rep. Mercedes Alvarez presided over a recent House panel meeting to tackle the status of the Republic Act (RA) 12000 or the Negros Island Region (NIR) Act, which was enacted in June 2024.

In the meeting held by the House Committee on Visayas Development, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)-NIR Regional Director Arcio Casing Jr. said that the operationalization of the regional office was ongoing.

Casing adds that once it is set up, the NEDA-NIR will proceed with organizing the Regional Development Council (RDC) in NIR right after the elections.

The measure, said Alvarez, will enhance "the efficiency and responsiveness of public service delivery".

According to Casing, their current plan is to have the RDC-NIR proceed to draft the NIR Regional Development Plan.

For now, Department of Agriculture (DA)-NIR OIC Red Jose Barrogo said temporary satellite offices have already been set up in Bacolod City, Dumaguete, and Siquijor.

"We are envisioning that Negros Island Region to be the new investment region blooming with opportunities," Barrogo said.

However, Department of Budget and Management (DBM)-NIR RD Maria Liane Gayumali clarified that no fund for the operationalization of the NIR was allocated in the 2025 budget.

The reason for this was because the proposed 2025 national budget had already been submitted before the NIR Act was enacted, Gayumali explained.

Nonetheless, she said, funds for the operation of the NIR for 2026 and succeeding years will be incorporated in the upcoming national budgets.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/26/immediate-implementation-of-negros-island-region-act-a-must-alvarez>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Gov't imposes ₱49 per kilo price ceiling on imported rice starting March 1

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Feb 26, 2025 01:34 PM

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The maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice, currently set at ₱52 per kilo, will be lowered to ₱49 beginning next month, according to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel.

The new price cap to take effect on March 1 marks the first time the MSRP will go below the ₱50 mark since it was introduced last month.

In a statement, Laurel has clarified that the MSRP seen in public and private markets will still not be implemented across the country.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) will instead opt to impose the price cap “selectively,” particularly in Metro Manila and other “key cities and urban centers.”

“In many provincial areas, we’ve seen prices of imported rice prices already lower than the MSRP. So we will apply it more selectively,” said Laurel.

Launched on Jan. 20 with an initial limit of ₱58 per kilo, the DA initiated the MSRP to ensure that rice remains affordable for consumers while maintaining the profitability of the rice industry.

Rice prices in the country were monitored to remain high despite the decline in world market prices and the rice tariff cuts from 35 to 15 percent last year.

The MSRP was gradually reduced to ease the transition for the rice industry. It slid to ₱55 on Feb. 5 and went down further to ₱52 on Feb. 15.

Before the price cap, imported rice that was five percent broken was sold between ₱62 and ₱64 per kilo.

Despite calls for a more immediate and substantial reduction, the DA chief has insisted on a slow rollout to avoid destabilizing the industry.

Laurel noted that a gradual transition would allow retailers to “liquidate higher-priced stocks and renegotiate contracts with suppliers.”

He earlier projected that imported rice could fall below ₱50 per kilo, provided that world market prices remain stable and a maximum landed cost of \$550 per metric ton (MT) for five percent broken rice.

Last week, the landed cost of five percent broken rice was quoted at \$490 per MT.

“We will review the numbers in the coming days to determine if there's room to lower the MSRP further,” said Laurel.

“As of now, there could be scope for additional reductions, but we’ll have to see,” he added.

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<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/26/price-cap-on-imported-rice-set-at-49-starting-march-1>



**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **4 World Bank loan-funded projects in Philippines progressing 'satisfactorily'**

**BY [BEN ARNOLD DE VERA](#)**

Feb 26, 2025 12:43 PM

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Four Philippine projects funded by World Bank loans totaling over \$1.37 billion (nearly ₱80 billion) are progressing satisfactorily, according to the Washington-based multilateral lender.

In separate implementation status and results reports this month and last month, the World Bank said the Philippines Multisectoral Nutrition Project, Mindanao Inclusive Agriculture Development Project, Beneficiary FIRST Social Protection Project, and Infrastructure for Safer and Resilient Schools all have "satisfactory" overall implementation progress towards achieving their respective development objectives. The Multisectoral Nutrition Project being implemented jointly by the Departments of Health (DOH) and of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) "has made noticeable progress in the implementation of activities across the different project components," the World Bank said on Feb. 25.

For instance, this project's performance-based grants (PBGs) have contributed significantly to improving project stewardship and prioritizing nutrition interventions in the budgeting and planning processes of local government units (LGUs).

Disbursement of loan proceeds has also improved to 57 percent last January from 52 percent in September 2024, "and [is] expected to increase further with the next tranche of PBGs in June 2025."

So far, \$100.8 million out of the \$ 178.1 million investment project financing has been spent for this project aimed at enhancing the utilization of a range of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions while improving key behaviors and practices to reduce stunting in targeted LGUs.

At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021, the World Bank reported that the Philippines suffered another "silent pandemic"—childhood stunting resulting from undernutrition. Stunted children are shorter in height compared to healthier, same-aged kids.

Pre-pandemic, 29 percent of Filipino children aged five and below were stunted, World Bank estimates had shown. In 2019, the Philippines had the fifth-highest stunting prevalence in the East Asia and Pacific region and was among the top 10 worldwide.

In the case of the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Mindanao Inclusive Agriculture Development Project, "key activities are well underway in the first nine ancestral domains (ADs) in the six regions of Mindanao, including an AD in Basilan province in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)," the World Bank said last Feb. 5.

To date, only 8.8 percent or \$8.8 million out of the \$100-million loan has been disbursed under this project that would increase agricultural productivity, resilience, and access to markets and services for organized farmer and fisherfolk groups in selected ADs and value chains in the southern Philippine island.

As for the DSWD's Beneficiary FIRST Social Protection Project, the World Bank cited "achievements of multiple digital transformation activities such as PhilSys ID adoption to authenticate 4Ps beneficiaries' identity, completion of pilot run to test dynamic social registry (i-Registro) web portal, and national rollout of digital financial literacy," referring to the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program.

As such, this project's overall risk rating has been upgraded from "moderate" to "substantial" previously.

The acronym "FIRST" stands for "fast, innovative and responsive service transformation" of the targeted 4.4 million 4Ps beneficiary-households.

As Manila Bulletin earlier reported, the World Bank approved the reallocation of \$95 million in loan proceeds from performance-based condition expenditures in November of last year to the DSWD's Pantawid cash grants, which now amount to \$393.5 million.

The loan's closing date has also been extended by one year to June 30, 2026, instead of June 30 of this year.

To recall, the World Bank approved this loan back in September 2020—at the height of the most stringent Covid-19 lockdowns, before taking effect in January 2021, during the Duterte administration.

"Of the \$600-million loan amount, total disbursement to date reached \$584.1 million (or 97 percent). From July 17 to Nov. 15, 2024, project disbursements amounted to \$146.8 million. With a realistic work plan that aligns with the project's conclusion in June 2026 and diligent monitoring of pending procurement items, financial management performance and disbursements are expected to further improve.," the World Bank said in a Jan. 29 report.

Meanwhile, loan financing for the Infrastructure for Safer and Resilient Schools project to be jointly implemented by the Departments of Education (DepEd) and of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) has yet to become effective, pending a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the two agencies as well as a legal opinion to be issued by the Department of Justice (DOJ), the World Bank said on Jan. 30.

In November of last year, the Philippine government and the World Bank signed a \$500-million loan agreement for this project to support the resilient recovery of disaster-affected schools in selected regions.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/26/4-world-bank-loan-funded-projects-in-philippines-progressing-satisfactorily-1>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# DA: No onion hoarding

**Bella Cariaso** - The Philippine Star

February 27, 2025 | 12:00am



A vendor is seen selling red onions at a market in Baguio City on September 13, 2022

STAR / Andy Zapata Jr.

MANILA, Philippines — No traces of onion hoarding have been found following an inspection of onion cold storage facilities nationwide, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Based on the Bureau of Plant Industry’s inspection, only 500 metric tons of red onions were stored in warehouses, mostly in Southern Tagalog and Central Luzon.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier ordered an inspection of cold storage facilities amid high retail prices of onion.

Local harvest was pegged at 30 MT, DA spokesman Arnel de Mesa said.

“We expect the peak of harvest between March and April, with an expected harvest for red onions at 145,000 MT and 35,000 MT for white onions,” he noted.

De Mesa said the 4,000 MT of imported bulbs is minimal compared to the expected harvest.

“Most of the imported bulbs came from China. Most of the volume will be arriving this week,” he said.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2025/02/27/2424473/da-no-onion-hoarding>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# P49/kilo max SRP for imported rice starts March

**Bella Cariaso** - The Philippine Star

February 27, 2025 | 12:00am



A rice vendor sells his products to customers at Paco Market in Manila on February 1, 2025.

STAR / Noel Pabalate

MANILA, Philippines — A maximum suggested retail price (SRP) of P49 per kilo of imported rice will take effect on Saturday amid efforts to reduce rice prices, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA). The rice max SRP will be implemented only in Metro Manila, key cities and other urban centers, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said yesterday.

“In many provincial areas, we’ve seen imported rice prices already lower than the max SRP, so we will apply it more selectively,” he said.

Imposing a max SRP was necessary as the retail price of imported grains reached P64 per kilo despite a 20-percent tariff cut, Tiu Laurel noted.

“We will review the numbers in the coming days to determine if there’s room to lower the max SRP further. As of now, there could be scope for additional reductions, but we’ll have to see,” he said.

Initially set at P58 per kilo on Jan. 20, the rice max SRP decreased to P55 per kilo on Feb. 5 and P52 per kilo on Feb. 15.

The landed cost of five-percent broken imported rice dropped to \$490 per metric ton on Feb. 21, from \$550 per MT.

The retail price of imported special rice ranged between P55 and P62 per kilo; imported premium rice, between P49 and P57 per kilo; imported well-milled rice, between P43 and P46 per kilo and imported regular-milled rice, between P36 and P46 per kilo, based on the DA’s monitoring of Metro Manila markets. Farmers’ group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag) welcomed the reduced rice max SRP.

With the current price of five-percent broken Vietnam rice at \$380 per MT, imported rice should further go below P40 per kilo, Sinag executive director Jayson Cainglet said.

Declaring a food security emergency and imposing a max SRP were necessary government interventions following the dismal failure of tariff cuts to tame rice prices, Cainglet noted.

“It is the right time to call for the repeal of Executive Order 62 and generate revenues from imported rice that is earmarked to support rice farmers,” he said, referring to the measure that reduced tariffs.

Global rice prices, he said, have plummeted significantly, dropping by \$146 per MT, from \$568 on July 10, 2024, to \$380 metric ton this month.

### **Rice import policy hit**

The government’s tariff cuts and unlimited rice importation are to blame for the severe drop in the farmgate price of palay nationwide, former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor said yesterday.

“Farmers in Mangaldan, Pangasinan have postponed selling their palay due to traders’ low buying prices. In San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, prices of newly harvested palay have dipped to as low as P13 per kilo,” he said.

Based on Bureau of Customs data, Montemayor said at least 4.8 million MT of rice arrived in 2024, making the country the world’s biggest rice importer.

“Another 331,000 MT entered last January, resulting in a supply glut coinciding with the start of the dry season harvest,” he noted.

Clean-and-dry palay is valued at P19 per kilo, with traders hesitating to buy stocks due to the influx of imported rice in the market, he said.

“The National Food Authority (NFA) has not been procuring clean-and-dry palay from farmers at the announced price of P23, since its warehouses are still full of stocks from previous harvests,” he noted.

In Occidental Mindoro, about 5,000 sacks in Sablayan and 3,700 sacks in San Jose have been deteriorating in NFA bodegas since 2022, Montemayor said.

For his part, Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor said traders are hedging against a continued drop in rice prices due to the aggressive implementation of the rice max SRP and disposal of NFA rice through local government units and Kadiwa outlets at a subsidized rate of P33 per kilo.

Montemayor is pushing for the restoration of the 35-percent tariff on imported rice to influence local traders to buy farmers’ palay at better prices.

### **Tomato price drops to P4 per kilo**

Farmers should coordinate with field offices of the DA amid reports that tomato retail prices have dropped to P4 per kilo, Agriculture spokesman Arnel de Mesa said.

“If you have many tomatoes, you should coordinate with municipal agriculturists or our regional field offices. They will help them market their produce either in the nearest markets or Kadiwa outlets in the region. We will find ways. They should not throw their harvest,” De Mesa said.

The farmgate price of tomatoes in Pangasinan and Nueva Ecija has fallen to as low as P4 per kilo amid the peak harvest of tomatoes, according to Sinag.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/27/2424499/p49kilo-max-srp-imported-rice-starts-march>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Rice tariff collection plunges 70% in January

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

February 27, 2025 | 12:00am



Imported rice is unloaded at a port in Manila.

STAR / File

## Lower rate, import volume

MANILA, Philippines — The government's rice tariff collections in January plunged by 70 percent on an annual basis because of lower tariff rate and decline in import arrivals.

Bureau of Customs (BOC) data showed it collected P1.43 billion in rice tariffs last month, about P3.31 billion lower than the P4.74 billion recorded in the same period last year.

Rice import volume in January fell by more than a quarter to 330,501 metric tons from 474,194 MT in the same month last year.

Industry sources told The STAR that imports were down because of the high carry-over stocks from last year when private entities imported a record-high 4.8 million MT of rice.

Furthermore, some importers canceled their contracts last month after Vietnam rice prices sharply fell due to its forthcoming harvest amid abundant global supplies driven by the return of India to the world market. Data from the Bureau of Plant Industry showed that rice import applications by private entities in January plunged substantially to 383,452 MT from 2.25 million MT in the same month last year.

Earlier this month, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that Vietnam rice prices saw a steep decline last month as harvest in the world's second-largest rice exporter is set to begin, coupled with the imposition of a price ceiling on imported rice by the Philippines.

The FAO pointed out that the implementation of a maximum suggested retail price by the Philippines, which is Vietnam's prime destination for rice, coupled by the declaration of a food security emergency on rice impacted Vietnam rice prices.

As a result, Vietnam rice prices, especially for premium five percent broken, fell by \$9 to \$62 per MT, according to the FAO.

The average price of the country's imported rice in January saw a slight dip to \$505 per MT from \$512 per MT in the same month in 2024, BOC data showed.

Industry sources also noted that the prevailing lower tariff regime on imported rice might pose a threat to the P30 billion minimum funding requirement of the government's rice competitiveness enhancement fund (RCEF).

Experts emphasized that rice imports may have to double from last year's record-high volume in order for the government to collect P30 billion in tariffs because of the low rate coupled by declining world rice prices.

Last year, the BOC collected a record P34 billion in rice tariffs, driven by bigger import volume coupled with higher shipment valuation and a weaker peso. The amount guarantees the RCEF budget this year, with the additional or excess collections bankrolling other programs aimed at improving the competitiveness of the local rice sector.

On a peso basis, the average price of imported rice in January increased by three percent year-on-year to P29.4 per kilo from P28.58 per kilo due to weaker currency during the period.

Nonetheless, the average landed cost of imported rice last month fell by 12 percent on an annual basis to P34 per kilo from P39 per kilo, thanks to the record-low rice tariff rate of 15 percent.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/02/27/2424421/rice-tariff-collection-plunges-70-january>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# DA cuts MSRP of imported rice

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:50 AM February 27, 2025



Inquirer file photo/Richard A. Reyes

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) will further reduce the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of imported rice to P49 a kilogram effective March 1 but only in selected areas, including Metro Manila.

According to the DA, it would take a more “surgical” approach in implementing the price reduction. The current price ceiling of imported rice is P52 per kg.

“In many provincial areas, we’ve seen prices of imported rice already lower than the MSRP. So we will apply it more selectively,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement on Wednesday.

“We will review the numbers in the coming days to determine if there’s room to lower the MSRP further. As of now, there could be scope for additional reductions, but we’ll have to see,” he added.

This is the first time the price ceiling for imported rice will drop below the P50-per-kg level since it was placed under the MSRP on Jan. 20.

“This was a noncoercive measure aimed at steering retail prices of imported rice to reflect the steady decline in world market prices and the decision of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to slash rice tariffs from 35 percent to 15 percent, effective last July,” the DA said.



The MSRP for 5-percent broken imported rice was initially set at P58 per kg. It was further reduced to P55 per kg on Feb. 5 and then to P52 per kg on Feb. 15 in response to improving rice market conditions.

Before the imposition of the MSRP, retail prices of local regular milled and well-milled rice ranged between P38 and P53 per kg as of Jan. 13, based on the DA's price monitoring. Imported regular milled and well-milled rice, on the other hand, retailed from P40 to P54 per kg.

Even before that, 5-percent broken imported rice was being sold from P62 to P64 per kg, according to the DA.

But as of Feb. 25, Metro Manila markets were selling local regular milled and well-milled rice from a low of P38 per kg to a high of P52 per kg. Imported regular and well-milled rice were priced at P36 to P46 per kg.

### **Projection**

Tiu Laurel had projected that imported rice prices would decline below P50 per kg last month as long as world market prices remained stable, noting that the maximum landed cost stood at \$550 per metric ton (MT) for 5-percent broken rice.

The DA said the landed cost has since then decreased by about 12 percent to \$490 per MT as of Feb. 21.

Agricultural group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag) welcomed the DA's latest move, saying the country was inching closer to reaching the "ideal price" of P40 to P45 per kg of imported rice.

"It is the right time to call for the repeal of [Executive Order No. 62] and generate revenues from imported rice that is earmarked to directly support our rice farmers," Sinag executive director Jayson Cainglet said in a statement.

But for the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), the government's "unlimited rice importation" policy, coupled with the rice tariff reduction, was to blame for the "severe" decline in palay prices in many parts of the country.

### **Low buying price**

In a statement, the group said that farmers in Mangaldan, Pangasinan, had to postpone the sale of their palay produce because of traders' low buying prices.

The FFF also said that prices for new palay harvests in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, have dipped to as low as P13 per kg.

Clean-and-dry palay was priced at P19 per kg, with traders reportedly hesitating to buy stocks due to the influx of imported rice in the market.

“At the same time, the National Food Authority has not been procuring clean-and-dry palay from farmers at the announced price of P23, since its warehouses are still full of stocks from previous harvests,” it added. Citing data from the Bureau of Customs, the FFF said some 331,000 MT of imported rice arrived in January on top of almost 4.8 million MT of imported rice recorded in 2024, resulting in a supply glut coinciding with the start of the dry season harvest.

“We urge the DA to address the emerging problems of farmers with the same vigor and persistence with which it has been cutting rice prices for consumers,” FFF national manager Raul Montemayor said.

[https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2038464/da-cuts-msrp-of-imported-rice?utm\\_source=\(direct\)&utm\\_medium=gallery](https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2038464/da-cuts-msrp-of-imported-rice?utm_source=(direct)&utm_medium=gallery)

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Samar town implements measure to address post-harvest fish losses

By: [Joey Gabieta @joeygabietaINQ](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)  
Inquirer Visayas / 12:32 PM February 26, 2025



Samar map. INQUIRER FILES

TACLOBAN CITY — A municipality that is home to the longest coastline in Samar, covering 181.96 km, is ramping up efforts to combat post-harvest fish losses through a comprehensive five-year development plan amounting to P249.8 million.

The initiative, backed by key stakeholders of the municipality of Daram, Samar, aims to reduce fish spoilage, improve storage facilities, and enhance fisherfolk livelihoods.

Vice Mayor Lucia Astorga stressed the significance of addressing the high rate of post-harvest fish loss, which stands at 40.34 percent, according to a study conducted by the Center for Sustainable Aquaculture and Agri-based Innovations in 2024.

Post-harvest fish loss (PHFL) refers to the measurable reduction in the quantity, quality, or monetary value of fish after they are caught and sold to consumers.

“Our seas have long been the lifeblood of our people yet many of our fisherfolk suffer due to inadequate preservation, lack of proper storage, and limited market access. By working together, we can reduce these losses, increase incomes, and ensure food security,” Astorga said.

“Reducing post-harvest losses is not just about economics; it’s about securing the future of our coastal communities. Through sustainable solutions, we can uplift the lives of our fisherfolk and create a more resilient fishing industry,” she added.

A forum conducted last Feb. 13 tackled the issue and gathered representatives from Oceana, an international advocacy organization dedicated to ocean conservation; the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR), the Department of Trade and Industry, Samar State University, and fisherfolk leaders, among others.

BFAR Regional Director Dominador Maputol affirmed the agency’s commitment to supporting post-harvest infrastructure projects, including the construction of cold storage facilities, fish landing centers, and processing plants.

“We are integrating conservation efforts with livelihood programs to ensure a sustainable fishing industry in Samar,” he said.

Lawyer Gloria Estenzo Ramos, Oceana vice president, highlighted the role of sustainable fisheries governance and vessel monitoring systems in ensuring responsible fishing practices.

“Daram can serve as a model for science-based fisheries management. By enhancing fisherfolk training and strengthening policy frameworks, we can create long-term solutions,” Ramos said.

Oceana recommends the following policies to reduce post-harvest fish losses: establish robust fish catch monitoring and reporting systems; ensure accurate data on fish catch; train women and mobile peddlers in postharvest handling and processing to minimize quality loss; and limit catch volumes of species with high PHFL during peak fishing seasons to reduce physical and market force loss.

The group also suggested establishing an organized marketing system to connect fishers and aqua farmers with buyers, enhancing market linkages in the fish distribution chain;

and implementing area- and species-specific price regulating mechanisms to control fish prices and ensure fair profits for fishers and aqua farmers, among others.

The municipality's five-year Comprehensive PHFL reduction plan proposes the establishment of cold storage units, drying facilities, fish processing centers, and skills training programs to curb losses and maximize fish value.

Stakeholders proposed solutions such as seasonal fishing quotas, expansion of market reach, and value-added fish processing to absorb the surplus supply.

The Alliance of Local Governments along Samar Bays and Channels also pledged to collaborate on resolving the issue by improving market coordination and exploring inter-provincial trading partnerships.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2038234/samar-town-implements-measure-to-address-post-harvest-fish-losses>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# DA re-forms anti-red tape panel



BY JORDEENE B. LAGARE  
FEBRUARY 27, 2025



BIZ BUZZ: Peter Paul wants in on Franklin Baker?

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is reconvening its Committee on Anti-Red Tape (CART) to enhance policies in line with the Ease of Doing Business Law.

The committee is expected to ensure compliance with the law and its implementing rules and regulations, according to Special Order No. 306 signed by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Under the special order, the panel is responsible for reengineering systems and procedures, carrying out the compliance cost analysis and time and motion studies and improving all services of the DA as deemed needed.

The committee is tasked to conduct a postimplementation assessment as well as review existing regulations and other related issuances.

The CART will carry out a preliminary impact assessment before formulating, modifying or repealing a regulation, and subsequently submit a preliminary impact statement to the Anti-Red Tape Authority (Arta) for evaluation.

Also, the committee will submit a regulatory impact assessment to the Arta after evaluating the impact of a proposed or existing policy on the ease of doing business in the agriculture sector.

The body is required to submit an annual regulatory plan no later than March 7 of each year or a regulatory notification form outlining every formulation, modification and repeal of rules.

Aside from adopting the Philippine Good Regulatory Principles, CART will facilitate knowledge transfer or information dissemination on Arta-related training, briefing or other related matters.

The committee will monitor and review the DA's citizen charter, particularly the procedures or steps, timeline, documentary requirements, fees and other details included in the charter.

Additionally, the CART will create a public assistance complaints desk or Arta help desk to receive complaints, feedback and monitor customer satisfaction.

<https://plus.inquirer.net/business/da-re-forms-anti-red-tape-panel/>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Max suggested retail price of imported rice down to P49 starting March

By: [Jown Manalo](#) - Reporter / [@jownmanaloINQ](#)  
INQUIRER.net / 03:07 PM February 26, 2025



IMPORTED

RICE

Workers unload sacks of rice from the Vietnam cargo ship in the port of Tabaco, Albay in this file photo taken in April 2024. The Department of Agriculture says the maximum suggested retail price of imported rice will go down to P49 beginning March 1. INQUIRER FILE PHOTO / EDWIN BACASMAS

MANILA, Philippines – The maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice will drop to P49 per kilo starting March 1, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Wednesday.

In a statement, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said this is the first time since the MSRP was introduced six weeks ago, that it will fall below the P50 mark.

The new pricing will be implemented “selectively in Metro Manila, key cities, and other urban centers” using a “more surgical approach,” Tiu Laurel added.

“In many provincial areas, we’ve seen prices of imported rice already lower than the MSRP. So we will apply it more selectively,” he explained.



Tiu Laurel noted that the MSRP was initially set at P58 per kilo when it was launched on January 20.

“This was a non-coercive measure aimed at steering retail prices of imported rice to reflect the steady decline in world market prices and the decision of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to slash rice tariffs from 35 percent to 15 percent, effective last July,” the DA secretary pointed out.

Given this development, Tiu Laurel also hinted at the possibility of further price reductions.

“We will review the numbers in the coming days to determine if there’s room to lower the MSRP further. As of now, there could be scope for additional reductions, but we’ll have to see,” he said.

Before the MSRP was introduced, imported rice with five percent broken grains was sold between P62 and P64 per kilo, according to the DA.

Meanwhile, the landed cost, or the total expense of importing five percent broken rice into the Philippines, was quoted at \$490 per metric ton on Friday, February 21, the DA added.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2038302/max-suggested-retail-price-of-imported-rice-down-to-p49-starting-march>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Solar-powered irrigation pumps a boon to Nueva Ecija farmers



BY INO CONTRIBUTOR  
FEBRUARY 27, 2025



**AGRI LEG UP** The Lupao Pag-ahon Agriculture Cooperative and Nueva Ecija Rice, Corn, Vegetable and Livestock Raisers Multi-Purpose Cooperative each received a mobile irrigation pump that eliminates their dependence on diesel-powered pumps to draw out water for their farmlands. —CONTRIBUTED

One Meralco Foundation (OMF), the corporate social responsibility arm of the Manuel V. Pangilinan-led Manila Electric Co. (Meralco), has turned over solar-powered mobile irrigation pumps to support around 140 farmers in the province of Nueva Ecija.

The Lupao Pag-ahon Agriculture Cooperative and Nueva Ecija Rice, Corn, Vegetable and Livestock Raisers Multi-Purpose Cooperative each received a mobile irrigation pump that eliminates their dependence on diesel-powered pumps to draw out water for their farmlands.

The rice and vegetable cooperatives both struggle with water access to grow their produce especially during extreme dry season, or El Niño, forcing some farmers to dig for a farm pond so they can adequately water their lands and grow produce. In Lupao, farmers source their water through deep wells, requiring them to use diesel-powered pumps with an estimated fuel expense of around P12,000 per cropping season.

“Our income as farmers has increased, especially since we no longer have to spend as much on fuel. Our other members also no longer worry when their irrigation system breaks down because we can bring the mobile solar irrigation pump to them. This way, their irrigation won’t be delayed, and their crops won’t be stressed,” said Lupao Pag-ahon Agriculture Cooperative secretary Henry Ramos.

Meralco senior vice president, chief revenue officer, and OMF trustee Ferdinand Geluz said that through the “first of its kind” project, “we are reviving the true spirit of bayanihan (community cooperation). Together, we are shaping a future where sustainability helps ensure the continuous growth of the agricultural sector—not just for today, but for future generations as well.”



### **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

The project was supported by the Meralco Employees Fund for Charity Inc. and employees from Meralco’s Customer Retail Services (CRS) group, which has made it its annual tradition to raise funds and find ways to offer help to communities in need, according to first vice president and head of CRS Charina Padua.

“We at Customer Retail Services are honored to collaborate with One Meralco Foundation on this impactful project. Together, let us sow the seeds of hope and let us light the path to a brighter future for our community and our country,” she said.

OMF president Jeffrey Tarayao, for his part, emphasized: “Rice, vegetables, and other produce are essential in most Filipino households, yet we often overlook the hardships our farmers endure every day to ensure we have these basic needs on our tables. By providing sustainable solutions for our farmers, we not only improve their productivity and efficiency, but also ultimately contribute to food security and economic development. These also foster innovation and cooperation that will help agricultural communities to thrive.”

The Agriculture and Livelihood Electrification program is part of OMF’s electrification for development portfolio. This includes electrification using solar power for schools, water access points, and rural health centers in off-grid communities in the Philippines.

To date, OMF has energized 304 schools, six rural health centers, four water access facilities, and seven agriculture and livelihood facilities or programs.

As a contribution to the universal aspiration of sustainable development and inclusive growth, these programs aim to bring the benefits of electrification to Filipino communities who need them the most.

<https://plus.inquirer.net/news/solar-powered-irrigation-pumps-a-boon-to-nueva-ecija-farmers/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Sugar regulator to set up soil lab in Bukidnon to help drive production

February 26, 2025 | 9:16 pm



**PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO**

THE Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said it will sign an agreement to establish a 40-hectare soil laboratory at Central Mindanao University (CMU) in Bukidnon.

The memorandum of agreement for the proposed soil laboratory at CMU, a state university, could be signed by March, Director Pablo Luis S. Azcona told *BusinessWorld* late Tuesday.

“We are still waiting on a counter-offer,” he said.

The soil laboratory will help Bukidnon, which accounts for 20% of Philippine sugar production, plant a wider range of cane varieties that are higher-yielding than current varieties.

The SRA is positioning Bukidnon as another possible center for sugar production alongside Negros, where sugarland is rapidly being converted by developers. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/02/26/655909/sugar-regulator-to-set-up-soil-lab-in-bukidnon-to-help-drive-production/>

## **BUSINESS WORLD:**

# **Sustainable fisheries, aquaculture to support coastal livelihoods — ADB**

February 26, 2025 | 9:17 pm



**A FAMILY of siganids fishers in Eastern Samar. — MARCIAL VILLANIA BOLEN**

THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) said sustainable fisheries and aquaculture are crucial to supporting coastal livelihoods and food security in the Philippines.

“These key blue-economy sectors are vital for supporting coastal livelihoods and ensuring food security, especially in countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Maldives, the Philippines, Vietnam and Pacific small-island developing states,” the ADB said in its 2025 Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Partnership report.

The ADB projected that with sustainable management, the economic value of coastal tourism in the Asia-Pacific region could more than double by 2030.

“This growth underscores the sector’s dynamism, especially as an engine of job growth, and highlights the critical need for targeted investment in workforce training. However, many jobs in the sector are seasonal or informal, with issues ranging from variable working hours and low wages to limited social protection.”

The ADB estimates that the Philippine coastal destinations accounted for 4 million tourism-related jobs, against India’s 9.6 million and Indonesia’s 10.7 million.

The bank said coastal tourism has become “indispensable” for these economies, providing a critical source of income and fostering service-oriented skills at the community level.

“As such, the blue economy, a subset of the green economy, requires specific attention. Sustainable fisheries are projected to grow rapidly, with the region’s fish farms anticipated to produce over 60% of global fish supplies by 2030,” it said.

The region’s renewable energy industry, which leads job creation in key sectors driving the green and blue transition, is estimated to support 10.5 million jobs, with “upward potential.”

The ADB noted the launch of 380 electric buses in Davao City which have helped reduce emissions and spurred employment.

Overall, the Asia-Pacific region has made insufficient progress with none of the 17 SDGs on track to be achieved by 2030, it said. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/02/26/655910/sustainable-fisheries-aquaculture-to-support-coastal-livelihoods-adb/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Imported rice SRP to be cut to P49 per kilo starting next month

February 26, 2025 | 9:14 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/EDD GUMBAN

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is lowering the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice to P49 per kilo starting in March in selected cities.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said that the new MSRP will apply to Metro Manila and other urban centers.

“In many provincial areas, we’ve seen prices of imported rice already lower than the MSRP. So we will apply it more selectively,” Mr. Laurel said in a statement on Wednesday.

March will mark the first time for the MSRP for imported rice to fall below P50 since the price cap was introduced on Jan. 20.

The MSRP was initially set at P58 per kilo. Prior to its introduction, imported rice consisting of 5% broken grains sold for between P62 and P64 per kilo.

“We will review the numbers in the coming days to determine if there is room to lower the MSRP further. As of now, there could be scope for additional reductions, but we will have to see,” he said.

In January, the DA projected the price of imported rice to fall below P50 per kilo, as long as world market prices remain stable. This assumed a maximum landed cost of \$550 per metric ton (MT) for 5% broken rice.

“The landed cost of 5% broken rice was quoted at \$490 per metric ton on Friday,” the DA said.

Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) Executive Director Jayson H. Cainglet said the lowering of the MSRP is a step closer to the ideal price of P40-P45 per kilo for imported rice.

“At the current price of \$380 per metric ton of 5% broken Vietnam rice, imported rice should further go below P40/kilo,” Mr. Cainglet said in a statement on Wednesday.

Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said that the new MSRP starting in March can still allow all parts of the supply chain to recover their costs.

“Our computations show that, even if the tariff is reinstated to 35%, an MSRP of P49 per kilo for rice with 5% broken would still be feasible and provide cost recovery and decent profits for all market players,” Mr. Montemayor said via Viber.

The MSRP on imported rice is among the DA's plans to lower rice prices alongside the declaration of a food security emergency on rice on Feb. 3, which allows the release of rice inventories held by the National Food Authority (NFA).

The emergency allows the release of NFA rice stocks to government agencies, local government units (LGUs), and the KADIWA ng Pangulo subsidized-market network.

Mr. Cainglet said the MSRP and the declaration of the food security emergency indicated the "dismal failure" of Executive Order (EO) No. 62 in taming rice prices.

"It is the right time to call for the repeal of EO 62 and generate revenue from imported rice that is earmarked to directly support our rice farmers," he added.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. last year issued EO 62 slashing tariffs on rice imports to 15% from 35% previously until 2028.

The FFF has blamed the tariff reduction along with the lack of restrictions on rice imports for the severe drop in the farmgate price of palay, or unmilled rice.

Citing Bureau of Customs data, the FFF said nearly 4.8 million tons of rice arrived in the country last year, while another 331,000 tons entered the country in January.

"Farmers in Mangaldan, Pangasinan have reportedly postponed selling their palay due to low buying prices of traders. In San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, prices for newly harvested palay have dipped to as low as P13 per kilo," it said.

"Clean and dry palay is at P19 per kilo, with traders reportedly hesitating to buy stocks due to the influx of imported rice in the market," it added.

The FFF said that it is seeking the restoration of the 35% tariff on imported rice to induce traders to buy palay at better prices.

"The landed cost of rice with 5% brokens from Vietnam will rise to P33 per kilo if we reinstate the 35% tariff," Mr. Montemayor said.

"If we add P15 for other costs and trading margins all the way to retailers, imported rice could still be sold at P48," he added. — **Justine Irish D. Table**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/02/26/655907/imported-rice-srp-to-be-cut-to-p49-per-kilo-starting-next-month/>

**REMATE:**

# Farmgate price ng kamatis bumagsak sa P4/kg

February 27, 2025 07:35



Bumagsak ang farmgate price ng kamatis sa Pilipinas sa P4 kada kilo dahil sa oversupply, ayon sa Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG).

Nararanasan ang malaking pagbagsak ng presyo sa Pangasinan, Nueva Ecija, at Nueva Vizcaya — malayong-malayo sa P300 kada kilo na presyo noong Enero.

Nanawagan ang SINAG sa gobyerno na magtakda ng floor price para sa kamatis upang matulungan ang mga magsasaka.

Hinihikayat din nila ang mga kooperatiba, institutional buyers, at mga negosyo na bumili ng kamatis direktso sa mga bukid sa halagang hindi bababa sa P10 kada kilo upang makatulong sa mga magsasaka na makabawi.

Wala pang pahayag ang Department of Agriculture tungkol sa isyung ito. *Santi Celario*

<https://remate.ph/farmgate-price-ng-kamatis-bumagsak-sa-p4-kg/>

**REMATE:**

# MSRP para sa imported rice ibababa sa P49/kilo simula Marso 1

February 26, 2025 17:48



MANILA, Philippines- Inanunsyo ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na tatapyasan nito ang maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) para sa imported rice sa susunod na buwan.

“The maximum suggested retail price for imported rice will be lowered to P49 per kilo starting Saturday, March 1, marking the first time since the MSRP was introduced six weeks ago that it will slip below the P50 mark,” ang sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Gayunman, inihayag ni Tiu Laurel na ang MSRP ay hindi ipatutupad sa buong bansa.

Sa halip, ang DA ay gagawa ng mas maraming “surgical” sa pamamagitan ng pagpapataw ng MSRP “selectively in Metro Manila, key cities, and other urban centers.”

“In many provincial areas, we’ve seen prices of imported rice already lower than the MSRP. So we will apply it more selectively,” wika ni Tiu Laurel.

Matatandaang ipinakilala ng DA ang MSRP noong January 20, nagtakda ng inisyal na presyo na P58 kada kilo.

Ang pagpapatupad ng MSRP sa imported rice ay inilarawan ng DA bilang isang “non-coercive measure.”

Unti-unti namang binabawasan ng DA ang MSRP para pagaanin ang transisyon para sa rice industry.

“Before the introduction of the MSRP, imported rice that are 5% broken were sold between P62 and P64 per kilo,” ang sinabi ng DA.

“We will review the numbers in the coming days to determine if there’s room to lower the MSRP further.

As of now, there could be scope for additional reductions, but we’ll have to see,” ang pahayag pa rin ni Tiu

Laurel. **Kris Jose**

<https://remate.ph/msrp-para-sa-imported-rice-ibababa-sa-p49-kilo-simula-marso-1/>



**REMATE:**

# DA sa local tomato farmers: Makipag-ugnayan sa PH gov't para sa 'direct market linkage'

February 26, 2025 16:41



MANILA, Philippines- Hinimok ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang lokal na tomato farmers na makipag-ugnayan para sa direct market linkages sa gitna ng harvest season.

Ito'y matapos na ang farmgate price ng kamatis ay napaulat na bumaba sa P4 per kilogram hanggang P5/kg sa ilang lugar.

Sinabi ni DA spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa na maaaring magbigay ang DA sa lokal na magsasaka ng market access sa makatwiran na presyo ng pagbili.

“Tutulungan namin sila kung saan pwedeng i-market sa malapit na palengke o sa ating Kadiwa sa mga regions,” ayon kay de Mesa.

Winika pa ni De Mesa na maaaring humingi ng tulong ang mga magsasaka mula sa municipal agriculturists o DA regional field offices.

Nanawagan naman ito sa mga mangangalakal na iwasan na magsamantala o mag-agrabyado ng mga lokal na magsasaka.

Sa kabilang dako, binigyang-diin ni De Mesa ang pangangailangan para sa cold storage facilities para tugunan ang pabago-bagong farmgate at retail prices at ikonsidera rito ang 'seasonality' ng agricultural commodities gaya ng kamatis at sibuyas. **Kris Jose**

<https://remate.ph/da-sa-local-tomato-farmers-makipag-ugnayan-sa-ph-govt-para-sa-direct-market-linkage/>

**ABANTE:**

# MSRP ng imported na bigas ibabagsak sa P49 per kilo

Abante News

- February 26, 2025



Ibababa na ng Department of Agriculture (DA) sa P49 per kilo ang maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) ng bigas simula sa Marso 1.

Ang MSRP, na nagsisilbing price ceiling, ay hindi ipatutupad sa buong bansa kundi sa piling lugar lamang tulad ng Metro Manila, ilang mga lungsod at urban center.

Ayon kay Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., nakita na ng DA na bumaba na ang presyo ng imported rice at mas mababa pa ito kaysa sa itinakdang MSRP.

Sabi ng kalihim, titignan nito kung kakayanin pang ibaba ang MSRP sa dara-ting na panahon.

“We will review the numbers in the coming days to determine if there’s room to lower the MSRP further.

As of now, there could be scope for additional reductions but we’ll have to see,” saad ni Tiu Laurel.

Unang pinatupad ng DA ang MSRP noong Enero 20 sa presyong P58 per kilo. Kahit may mga nakita ang DA na hindi sumusunod sa MSRP, walang naparusahan. Sabi ng DA, hindi puwersahan o non-coercive na pamamaraan ang MSRP para mapababa ang presyo ng imported rice.

Pangatlong beses nang ibaba ng DA ang MSRP sa Marso 1. Mula sa P58 per kilo, binaba na ito sa P55 per kilo noong Pebrero 5 at muli sa P52 per kilo noong Pebrero 15. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/02/26/msrp-ng-imported-na-bigas-ibabagsak-sa-p49-per-kilo/>

**MANILA STANDARD:**

# Imported rice price ceiling set at P49 per kilo in March

By Othel V. Campos

February 27, 2025, 12:45 am

The maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of imported rice will drop to P49 per kilo in selected areas across the country beginning March 1, in line with the Marcos administration's promise of substantially lowering the prices of basic goods.

On Wednesday, Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. clarified that the reduced rice MSRP will be enforced in Metro Manila and key urban centers but not nationwide.

"In many provincial areas, imported rice prices are already lower than the MSRP, so we will apply it more selectively," he explained.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) introduced the MSRP policy on January 20 at P58 per kilo as a non-coercive measure to align retail prices with declining world market rates.

This followed President Marcos' decision to cut rice tariffs from 35 percent to 15 percent last July. The MSRP has since been lowered on a gradual basis to ease the transition for industry stakeholders.

Before its introduction, imported rice with 5 percent broken grains sold for P62 to P64 per kilo.

"We will review the numbers in the coming days to assess further reductions. As of now, there may be room to lower it, but we'll have to see," Tiu Laurel said.

In January, he projected that imported rice prices could dip below P50 per kilo if world market prices remained stable, with a maximum landed cost of \$550 per metric ton (MT) for 5 percent broken rice.

As of February 21, the landed cost stood at \$490/MT.

As this developed, the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) called for the restoration of the 35 percent tariff on imported rice to encourage local traders to buy palay at better prices.

"With a 35 percent tariff, the landed cost of Vietnamese rice with 5 percent broken would increase to P33 per kilo. Adding P15 for other costs and trading margins, imported rice could still be sold at P48," said FFF national manager Raul Montemayor.

The farmers' group blamed the government's policy of unlimited rice imports and the tariff reduction to 15 percent for the sharp decline in palay prices across the country.

It can be recalled that in January 2025, the landed cost of 5 percent broken rice, including freight, insurance, and the 15 percent tariff, averaged only P28 per kilo—significantly lower than current retail prices and the minimum suggested retail price (MSRP).

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314562490/imported-rice-price-ceiling-set-at-p49per-kilo-in-march.html>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# **SRP for imported rice to be set at P49/kg**

**By Giselle P. Jordan**

**February 27, 2025**

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) will set a P49 per kilogram (kg) maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice starting March 1.

According to the DA, the imposition of an MSRP is the agency's "non-coercive measure" to lower rice prices, coinciding with the decline of rice prices in the world market, and in line with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s order to reduce the rice tariffs from 35 to 15 percent last July.

The MSRP for imported rice was initially at P58/kg when it was first introduced on Jan. 20 and was lowered to P55/kg on Feb. 25, and P52/kg on Feb. 15.

The gradual price reduction was meant to "ease the transition" for the rice industry.

However, unlike the previous MSRP, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel Jr. said this new MSRP will not be implemented nationwide but will be selectively imposed in Metro Manila, key cities, and other urban centers. The secretary said this is a more "surgical" approach.

"In many provincial areas, we've seen prices of imported rice already lower than the MSRP. So, we will apply it more selectively," he said.

Before the introduction of an MSRP, 5 percent broken rice was sold at P62 to P64/kg.

"We will review the numbers in the coming days to determine if there's room to lower the MSRP further. As of now, there could be scope for additional reductions, but we'll have to see," Tiu-Laurel said.

Last January, the DA secretary projected that imported rice prices could fall below P50/kg if prices in the world market remain stable at a maximum landed cost of \$550 per metric ton (MT) for 5-percent broken rice.

As of Feb. 21, the landed cost of 5-percent broken rice is \$490 per MT.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/27/news/national/srp-for-imported-rice-to-be-set-at-p49kg/2063224>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

## **Region 2 farmers adopt biofertilizers**

**By Leander C. Domingo**

**February 27, 2025**

REGION 2 (Cagayan Valley) is advancing sustainable rice farming with biofertilizer utilization under the Masagana Rice Industry Development Program (MRIDP) of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Barby Balcita of the DA Region 2 Agriculture and Fisheries Information Section said the initiative is being carried out across different provinces of Cagayan Valley in a concerted effort to enhance rice productivity and promote sustainable agriculture.

She added the initiatives commenced last January 2025 and will continue until the last week of this month. Part of the initiative is drone mapping, a crucial step in optimizing fertilizer application and monitoring rice fields more efficiently.



**Farmers in Cagayan Valley (Region 2) are adopting biofertilizers that can be applied in the field with drones. DA PHOTO**

**"By utilizing advanced technology, the DA-RFO2 (Regional Field Office 2) aims to ensure precise and data-driven agricultural practices, enabling farmers to maximize their yield potential while reducing input costs," she said.**

Technical briefings and field demonstrations on biofertilizers are also being conducted by partner agricultural companies in collaboration with DA, and provincial and local government units (LGUs) to educate farmers on the benefits and application of biofertilizers.

The training sessions provide essential knowledge on how biofertilizers improve soil health, enhance nutrient absorption, and contribute to sustainable farming practices.

Balcita said that agricultural experts and field technicians lead the discussions, ensuring farmers are well-equipped with the necessary information to integrate biofertilizers into their farming systems effectively.

DA-RFO2 Executive Director Rose Mary Aquino said the collaboration with LGUs is facilitating the distribution to eligible farmers biofertilizers and drone service vouchers, enabling them to access drone services, ensuring uniform and efficient application of biofertilizers in their fields.

Aquino said the initiative demonstrates the government's dedication to equipping farmers with innovative solutions to improve their livelihoods and reinforce the region's role in the country's rice sector.

"The active participation of local farmers and stakeholders in these initiatives is expected to yield positive outcomes, further strengthening the region's position as a key player in the country's rice production sector," she added.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/27/business/agribusiness/region-2-farmers-adopt-biofertilizers/2062889>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Coops see success under rice program

**By Conrad M. Cariño**

**February 27, 2025**

WITH over 300 members, the Patag-Coroña Irrigators Association Inc. based in Maramag, Bukidnon benefitted from rice program of the government spearheaded by the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice).

Prior to the introduction of new methods and technologies, the coop has been utilizing traditional rice cultivation methods, thinking these would be enough to generate good yield.

In particular, its members used a large quantity of seeds to cultivate rice, or 80 to 100 kilograms per hectare kg/ha under the direct-seeding method.

"Farming wasn't just a job; it was our life," said Honorato Dizon, 63, a coop member and a farmer-cooperator under PalaySikatan program of PhilRice.

For years, he adhered to the traditional practice of broadcasting 100kg/ha of rice seeds, believing that a higher seeding rate would lead to better yields. And at rice seeds costing P1,800 per 40-kg sack, this meant high cost for farmers.

So, Dizon wanted a better approach but finding high-quality rice seeds was difficult for them until the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) Seed Program led by PhilRice gave them access to inbred seeds of better quality.

"Back then, we often had to search far and wide for seeds, sometimes traveling to other towns. But more often than not, we just exchanged seeds with neighboring farmers if their yields were good," he added.

The PalaySikatan initiative also helped the Patag-Coroña coop to reassess and enhance their farming practices and expanded the area where new cultivation methods will be applied from 6 ha to 50 ha.

Aside from promoting high-quality inbred certified seeds under the RCEF Seed Program, the initiative also introduced mechanized farming technologies, such as drone-assisted direct seeding, which are showcased in techno-demos nationwide. The adoption of PalayCheck System technologies, including its digital app, was also encouraged to support efficient and cost-saving rice mechanization interventions.

Dizon joined the techno-demo of the new methods and technologies under PalaySikatan with a mix of curiosity and skepticism. He doubted whether 40kg of seeds could suffice for a hectare of direct-seeded rice. Despite his silent protest, he decided to give it a try, hoping for positive results.

"I often broadcast 100kg of seeds, but now I realize that this doesn't necessarily result in a higher yield. Forty kilograms is indeed enough," he said.

With the farming technologies introduced, he saw significant improvements.

"The grains are fuller and healthier, and there are fewer pest problems. The drone seeder provided just enough space for each grain, leading to lower seed costs, which I was able to redirect toward fertilizer and pesticides," Dizon said.

With the 40kg/ha of seeds applied through the drone seeder, the improved spacing allowed the rice to also grow more robust, resulting in better harvest.

"I was able to surpass my previous harvest — from 5.2 tons per hectare (t/ha) it increased to 6.6t/ha, a 27-percent increment," Dizon said.

For his part, Abraham Sendiong, the Patag-Coroña coop chairman, said the PhilRice Seed Program enabled them to source seeds easily.

"Before, we used to travel 35 minutes just to buy good rice seeds. Now, we have easy access to certified seeds," Sendiong said.

The coop leader said that the success of farmers like Dizon also served as a demonstration of the viability of adopting to new technologies offered under the PalaySikatan program.

"Many farmers were hesitant, but through the techno-demos and the testimonies of farmer-cooperators, the adoption rate has gone up," Sendiong said. "How did you do it? What farm practices should I adopt? These are the questions we often hear from fellow farmers."

Today, members of the Patag-Coroña Coop are also champions of the RCEF Seed Program, advocating for the use of certified seeds alongside modern farming practices.

"It's not just about tradition; it's about learning and growing," Dizon said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/27/business/agribusiness/coops-see-success-under-rice-program/2062885>



**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# **Tomato prices drop to P4/kilo, farmers urged to coordinate with DA**

**By Philippine News Agency**

**February 26, 2025**

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Tuesday urged local tomato farmers to coordinate for direct market linkages amid the harvest season.

This came after farmgate prices of tomatoes reportedly dropped to P4 per kilogram to P5/kg in some areas.

In an interview, DA spokesman Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the DA can provide local farmers with market access at a reasonable buying price.

"Tutulungan namin sila kung saan pwedeng i-market sa malapit na palengke o sa ating Kadiwa sa mga (We will help them where to market [their produce] either in nearby markets or in our Kadiwa [centers] in the) regions," he said.

De Mesa said farmers can seek assistance from municipal agriculturists or DA regional field offices.

He called on traders to refrain from taking advantage of the local farmers.

De Mesa underscored the need for cold storage facilities to address fluctuating farmgate and retail prices considering the seasonality of agricultural commodities like tomatoes and onions.

The DA earlier said they expect to operationalize the Mega cold storage facility in Taguig City by 2026, which has a storage capacity of 5,000 metric tons. PNA

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/26/news/tomato-prices-drop-to-p4kilo-farmers-urged-to-coordinate-with-da/2062677>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **DA to bring down MSRP on imported rice to P49 a kilo**

Ada Pelonia

February 26, 2025

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) will lower the maximum suggested retail price for imported rice to P49 per kilo starting March 1.

This move marked the first time that the MSRP would slip below the P50 mark since it was introduced over a month ago.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., however, clarified that the MSRP would not be implemented nationwide.

Instead, the agency will take a “surgical” approach, imposing the MSRP selectively in Metro Manila, key cities, and other urban centers.

“In many provincial areas, we’ve seen prices of imported rice already lower than the MSRP. So we will apply it more selectively,” Laurel said in a statement.

“We will review the numbers in the coming days to determine if there’s room to lower the MSRP further. As of now, there could be scope for additional reductions, but we’ll have to see,” he said. DA first introduced the MSRP on January 20, which settled at an initial price of P58 per kilo. This was gradually reduced to ease the transition for the rice industry.

It added that the measure aimed at steering retail prices of imported rice in its bid to reflect the steady decline in world market prices and the slashed rice tariffs to 15 percent until 2028 effective last July.

The DA said that before the imposition of MSRP, imported 5-percent-broken rice variety was sold between P62 and P64 per kilo.

In January, the DA chief had projected that the price of imported rice could fall below P50 per kilo, provided world market prices remain stable, with a maximum landed cost of \$550 per metric ton (MT) for 5 percent broken rice.

The agency said the landed cost of 5 percent broken rice was quoted at \$490 per MT on February 21.

### **Price spike**

Meanwhile, the DA recently identified 12 regions in the country, including a major rice producer, which saw extraordinary price hikes of the staple.

The agency identified areas affected by the surge in rice prices along with their corresponding monthly rice allocations. On the list is Western Visayas, one of the country’s top rice-producing regions.

These areas will be given priority in allocations for cheaper rice under the recent declaration of a food emergency.

Under Department Circular (DC) 4, an initial allocation of 625,600 units of 50-kilo bags, or 31,280 metric tons (MT) of rice from the National Food Authority (NFA), could be availed of monthly by local government units (LGUs) from the determined areas.

Broken down, the monthly allocation of the National Capital Region (NCR) stood at 293,000 bags; Western Visayas at 58,000 bags; Region 4 at 47,000 bags; Bicol Region at 38,600 bags; Central Visayas at 50,000 bags; Eastern Visayas at 18,000 bags.

Zamboanga Peninsula will have a monthly allocation of 21,000 bags; Northern Mindanao at 20,000 bags; Davao Region at 19,000 bags; Soccsksargen at 36,000 bags; Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) at 5,000 bags; and Caraga at 20,000 bags.

However, the list could still be expanded upon further determination by the DA.

The LGUs from these affected areas would sell the rice stocks to their respective constituents at P35 per kilo under the food security emergency declaration.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/26/da-to-bring-down-msrp-on-imported-rice-to-p49-a-kilo/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **Volatile climate splits weather agencies on El Niño messaging**

Mary Hui & Brian K Sullivan | Bloomberg  
February 26, 2025

Predicting the onset and intensity of the weather-roiling El Niño and La Niña events is crucial for global markets, and meteorologists need to get the messaging right or risk sparking confusion and backlash.

Australia's forecaster, which faced criticism last year after an unusual El Niño, is taking a less-is-more approach, while the World Meteorological Organization and the Philippines are fielding requests for more detailed and frequent information. The contrasting styles underscore the challenge for agencies seeking to balance demands for certainty against the volatility of weather. An accurate read on the status of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation is essential for governments, energy markets and farmers planning their cropping regimes, especially as global warming exacerbates extreme weather. Warm and cold phases can cause sapping droughts or unleash drenching rain from the Asia-Pacific to the US, and cost the global economy trillions.

"It's vital information," said Tristan Meyers, a meteorologist at New Zealand's National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research. "It gives you a little bit of an insight into how the seasons will develop."

South American fishermen first noticed periods of unusually warm water in the Pacific Ocean centuries ago, which they named El Niño de Navidad, and modern researchers came to realize its importance to global weather in the 1960s. La Niña was named about two decades later and today, climate variations are monitored by an array of buoys across the Pacific.

Australia's weather bureau stopped issuing its fortnightly updates in December because they had "created an overemphasis on ENSO as a predictor of seasonal conditions" and "the likelihood and severity of weather events," according to a spokesperson. The agency says its long-term forecasts on rain and temperatures are a better guide.

"El Niños and La Niñas just weight the probability of having wetter or drier, or warmer or cooler conditions in different parts of the world, but they don't rule out the possibility of the opposite," said Andrew King, an associate professor in climate science at the University of Melbourne.

That subtlety can often be lost in communication, as the Australia bureau found after its declaration of El Niño in late 2023. Despite the call being correct, the agency faced intense criticism after an atypical event: wet instead of dry.

"When the forecasts end up being so wrong, that has a huge effect on us," said Rhys Turton, a crop farmer in Western Australia and the chair of industry group GrainGrowers Ltd. "You can't reverse those decisions you made early in the season, like what to plant, or how much to plant."

### **Divided outlook**

People want certainty from a discipline that can't deliver it, according to Jon Gottschalck, chief of the US Climate Prediction Center's Operational Prediction Branch. Forecasts are based on probabilities and sometimes the unexpected or low-odds outcome happens, which can lead to complaints.

“Nuances in our forecasts mean something even if stakeholders don’t like to see it,” said Gottschalck, adding that “ENSO is still the most predictable seasonal and inter-annual prediction we have.”

ENSO is monitored using indexes that measure deviations in Pacific Ocean temperatures from averages in preceding decades, and with the world getting hotter, there are concerns about overestimating El Niños and underestimating La Niñas. Some are using methods to remove the background noise caused by global warming, but more research is needed on their effectiveness. The US agency, for example, informally tracks a relative oceanic Niño index that subtracts the tropics-wide sea temperature anomaly. The relative measure has consistently run cooler than the traditional index over the past year by at least 0.5C (0.9F) —the very threshold that makes or breaks El Niño or La Niña events.

Even without the challenge of a warming world, global ENSO forecasting can still create uncertainty, with this year’s yes-no La Niña an example of that conundrum. Earlier this year, the Philippines and the US said La Niña had developed, while Japan and Australia still see conditions as neutral. The lack of unity stems from each nation using different standards for measuring ENSO thresholds.

“It’s like a philharmonic concert without a conductor. Each instrument, whether it’s the Australian one or the American one, or the French one, they play their best score perfectly, but it doesn’t prevent a cacophony occasionally,” said Alexandre Peltier, a meteorologist and the head of the climatology division at Météo-France in New Caledonia.

‘Worse outcome’

The WMO, a United Nations agency that already issues ENSO outlooks by drawing on forecasts from several dozen meteorological centers worldwide, is creating a new “one-stop repository” to provide more detailed and frequent information. The hub is in response to growing demand from member states following “the rapid evolution of ENSO events in recent years,” said Wilfran Moufouma Okia, chief of climate prediction services at the agency.

In the Philippines, the country’s weather agency is seeking to provide more detailed information that’s tailored to specific regions and industries, including advice on what to do before, during, and after an El Niño or La Niña. The nation is on the frontline for typhoons that originate in the western Pacific.

As for Australia, its bureau will still make a declaration if there’s any change in ENSO status, though its less-is-more approach may still cause issues. University of Melbourne’s King said it risks leaving a vacuum to be filled by less credible sources that some may even mis-attribute to the weather agency.

“The bureau ends up with a worse outcome, potentially,” he said.

*With assistance from Keira Wright and Kevin Dharmawan /Bloomberg*

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/26/volatile-climate-splits-weather-agencies-on-el-nino-messaging/>

**ABANTE TONITE:**

# **Palay sumadsad sa P13 per kilo, unli import winakwak**

February 26, 2025

Bumagsak ang presyo ng palay sa P13 kada kilo na sinisisi ng Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) sa patakarang unli import ng pamahalaan na nagpalala pa sa epekto ng pagbaba ng taripa sa 15% mula 35% na sinimulan noon pang Hulyo 2024.

Ayon sa FFF, hindi rin bumibili ngayon ang National Food Authority (NFA) ng palay sa P23 per kilo dahil puno pa ang mga bodega nito mula sa mga pinamiling palay noong mga naunang ani.

Batay sa datos na nakalap ng FFF mula sa Bureau of Customs, halos 4.8 milyong tonelada ng bigas ang inangat noong nakaraang taon at may dumagdag pa na 331,000 tonelada na dumating sa bansa noong Enero.

Dahil dito, nagkaroon ng sobra-sobrang suplay ng bigas na nagpapababa ng presyo ng palay ngayong panahon ng ani, paliwanag ng FFF.

Sa kanilang pananaw, nagdadalawang-isip tuloy ang mga trader kung mamimili ng palay o hindi. Patuloy pa kasing bumababa ang presyo nito dahil sa binababang price ceiling sa imported na bigas at kompetensiya pa sila sa ibebenta ng mga lokal na pamahalaan at mga Kadiwa outlet na P33 per kilo lamang na bigas.

Sa San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, ibinebenta na lamang umano ang bagong aning palay ng P13 kada kilo. Habang ang malinis at tuyong palay ay nasa P19 kada kilo. Ngunit kahit mababa na ito, hindi pa rin namimili ang mga trader dahil marami ang pumapasok na imported na bigas na binababa pa ang presyo.

Hamon ng FFF sa Department of Agriculture, ipaglaban nito ang mga magsasaka na kasing sigasig sa pagpapababa nito ng presyo ng bigas para sa mga konsyumer. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/02/26/palay-sumadsad-sa-p13-per-kilo-unli-import-winakwak/>

**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:**

# **MSRP ng imported rice ibababa sa P49 kada kilo – DA**

[Angie dela Cruz](#)

February 27, 2025 | 12:00am



Ito naman ang sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel na kauna-unahang pagkakataon na maibaba sa P50 kada kilo ang imported na bigas mula nang ihain ang MSRP may anim na linggo na ang nakararaan.

MANILA, Philippines — Pinabababa pa ng Department of Agriculture (DA) sa P49 kada kilo ang maximum suggested retail price sa imported na bigas simula Marso 1, Sabado.

Ito naman ang sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel na kauna-unahang pagkakataon na maibaba sa P50 kada kilo ang imported na bigas mula nang ihain ang MSRP may anim na linggo na ang nakararaan.

Subalit paglilinaw ni Tiu-Laurel, hindi maipatutupad ang MSRP sa buong bansa at sa halip ay Metro Manila lamang at ibang malalaking siyudad at urban centers lamang.

“In many provincial areas, we’ve seen prices of imported rice already lower than the MSRP. So we will apply it more selectively,” ani Laurel.

Una nang itinakda sa MSRP sa P58 ang kada kilo ng bigas.

Ayon kay Laurel, nasa P62 hanggang P64 ang presyo ng kada kilo ng bigas noong hindi pa ipinatutupad ang MSRP.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/metro/2025/02/27/2424480/msrp-ng-imported-rice-ibababa-sa-p49-kada-kilo-da>