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MANILA BULLETIN:

'Mas mura': P33 per kilo rice can be bought in Camarines Sur, says Villafuerte

BY [ELLSON QUISMORIO](#)

Feb 27, 2025 11:43 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Camarines Sur 2nd district Rep. LRay Villafuerte said his province had been chosen as among the initial local government unit (LGU)-partners of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in selling rice priced as low as P33 per kilo.



(Ellson Quismorio/ MANILA BULLETIN)

Camarines Sur 2nd district Rep. LRay Villafuerte said his province had been chosen as among the initial local government unit (LGU)-partners of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in selling rice priced as low as P33 per kilo.

Villafuerte said this was an offshoot of the DA's declaration of a food security emergency earlier this month—as recommended by the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC)—to stabilize rice prices.

“In partnership with the DA, NFA (National Food Authority) and FTI (Food Terminal Inc.), the provincial government, along with several LGUs in Metro Manila, are selling cheaper rice, as part of the President’s commitment to fight elevated inflation by, among others, enabling Filipino consumers to buy rice acquired by the NFA at more affordable prices,” Villafuerte, a former three-term governor, said in a statement Thursday, Feb. 27.

Available at Kadiwa centers and other government outlets, the cheaper rice will be priced from P33 to P35 per kilo.

Villafuerte said that in particular, the provincial government of CamSur will sell the P33-per-kilo rice at the Provincial Capitol in the capital municipality of Pili, in Kadiwa outlets, and through other LGUs in the province.

He said the DA, NFA, and FTI plans to eventually expand the program in order to benefit more Filipinos. Villafuerte said the provincial government will be subsidizing the added expenses such as the operational costs to make the lowered prices for the staple grain possible.

“We will absorb logistics and other costs so we can sell at P33 a kilo, or without any markup, in support of this pro-consumer program of the President,” he said.

“This is certainly good news not only for our consumers but for our palay growers likewise as they and their families are rice consumers themselves, and also because the NFA, in being able to dispose of its buffer stocks stored in its warehouses, will be able to buy more produce from our farmers in the summer harvest season, which it can then sell to LGUs, Kadiwa centers and other government outlets,” he explained. Villafuerte says that while Camarines Sur is the country’s No. 6 rice producer, “We must not forget that our farmers are also rice consumers, so the cheaper rice at P33 a kilo will benefit both our consumers and our palay growers.”

The National Unity Party (NUP) president says the province's initial allocation is 25,000 sacks of rice, and this project will benefit an estimated 250,000 people in his province.

According to the DA, at least 67 LGUs, including Camarines Sur and several Metro Manila LGUs, have expressed their intent to join this program.

https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/27/p33-per-kilo-rice-can-be-bought-in-camarines-sur-says-villafuerte#google_vignette

MANILA BULLETIN:

Rice importation, tariff cut blamed for drop in ‘palay’ prices

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

Feb 27, 2025 02:44 PM



(MB FILE PHOTO)

The sharp decline in palay (unmilled rice) prices across the country, particularly during the dry-season harvest, is a result of the government’s policy of unlimited rice importation and tariff cuts on imported rice, the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) said.

“Based on Bureau of Customs (BoC) data, almost 4.8 million tons of rice arrived in 2024, making the country the world’s biggest rice importer. Another 331,000 tons entered last January, resulting in a supply glut coinciding with the start of the dry season harvest,” the FFF said in a statement.

Farmers in Mangaldan, Pangasinan, according to the group, have decided to delay selling their palay due to low buying prices from traders.

Meanwhile, in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, prices for newly harvested palay have dropped to as low as P13 per kilo, while clean-and-dry palay is being bought at P19 per kilo.

However, traders are reportedly hesitant to purchase more stocks, citing the influx of imported rice in the market.

The farmers' group noted that the National Food Authority (NFA) has yet to procure palay at its announced price of P23 per kilo, as its warehouses are still stocked with supplies from previous harvests.

“Some 5,000 sacks in Sablayan and another 3,700 sacks in San Jose have reportedly been stored – and deteriorating – in NFA bodegas in these towns since 2022,” the FFF stated.

Impact of import policies on market prices

The farmers' group claimed that traders are also holding back on purchasing rice stocks, anticipating further price drops due to the government's maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) policy and the continued disposal of NFA rice through local governments and KADIWA outlets at a subsidized rate of P33 per kilo.

The current price slump is being exacerbated by falling import costs, the FFF warned.

“Import prices for Vietnamese rice have decreased by over 30% compared to their peak levels in January 2024. The landed cost of rice with 5 percent broken, inclusive of freight and insurance and 15 percent tariff, averaged only P28 per kilo in January 2025, which is significantly lower than current retail prices and the MSRP,” the group stated.

Call to restore 35% tariff

To address the situation, the FFF urged the government to reinstate the 35 percent tariff on imported rice to push local traders to buy palay at better prices.

“The landed cost of rice with 5 percent broken from Vietnam will rise to P33 per kilo if we reinstate the 35 percent tariff. If we add P15 for other costs and trading margins all the way to retailers, imported rice could still be sold at P48 per kilo, well below the current MSRP of P52 per kilo,” Raul Montemayor, the national manager of FFF, said.

He urged the Department of Agriculture (DA) to address the “emerging problems of farmers with the same vigor and persistence with which it has been cutting rice prices for consumers.”

The farmers' group warned that should no immediate action be taken, the government's aggressive rice importation policies could leave local farmers struggling to recover losses, further discouraging them from planting for the next cropping season.

In June 2024, President Marcos signed Executive Order (EO) No. 62, reducing tariffs on imported rice from 35 percent to 15 percent.

Such policy sought to lower rice prices and stabilize the market.

Per the DA, the Philippines had imported 4.78 million metric tons of rice as of Dec. 31, 2024.



(MB FILE PHOTO)

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<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/27/rice-importation-tariff-cut-blamed-for-drop-in-palay-prices>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

‘Rice max SRP only in Metro Manila, key areas’

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

February 28, 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 — Rice prices are lower in many provinces, hence the maximum suggested retail price (SRP) of P49 per kilo of imported rice covers only Metro Manila, key cities and other urban centers, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

“Areas experiencing high retail prices of the grains are the focus of the intervention,” DA spokesman Arnel de Mesa said yesterday.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. on Wednesday said the rice max SRP will take effect on Saturday amid efforts to reduce prices.

Aside from Metro Manila, De Mesa said the rice max SRP will be enforced in Cebu, Metro Davao, Cagayan de Oro, Zamboanga and Calabarzon.

A food security emergency and rice max SRP were implemented by the DA as retail rice prices remain high despite a 20-percent tariff cut.

Pork max SRP

Meanwhile, Tiu Laurel will meet with stakeholders on March 6 to finalize a pork max SRP amid high pork prices.

“There is no final (figure on the max SRP), but I have figures in mind,” Tiu Laurel told The STAR yesterday.

A pork max SRP could be implemented on March 10, Tiu Laurel said.

P400/kilo galunggong

Meanwhile, retail prices of round scad or galunggong have reached as high as P400 per kilo compared to last month's P350 per kilo, the DA said.

Once dubbed the "poor man's fish," galunggong prices remain high despite the three-month closed fishing season ending on Feb. 16.

Commercial fishing vessels have resumed operating in the Zamboanga Peninsula and the Visayan Sea after the fishing ban.

The resumption of their operations is expected to bring down the retail prices of fish, particularly galunggong and sardines, De Mesa has said.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/28/2424731/rice-max-srp-only-metro-manila-key-areas>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA: Imported red onions now in markets

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

February 28, 2025 | 12:00am



He added that onions sold at P90 per kilo particularly at Mega Q-Mart in Quezon City were part of the 3,000 MT of imported bulbs authorized by the Department of Agriculture (DA) to be imported.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Imported red onions are now available in the markets after the arrival of at least 500 metric tons (MT) of imported red bulbs, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said yesterday. He added that onions sold at P90 per kilo particularly at Mega Q-Mart in Quezon City were part of the 3,000 MT of imported bulbs authorized by the Department of Agriculture (DA) to be imported.

The imported red onions were sold at Mega Q-Mart on Tuesday.

The DA has allowed the importation of 4,000 MT of bulbs, including 3,000 MT of red onions and 1,000 MT of white onions.

Agriculture spokesman Arnel de Mesa has said that at least 459 MT of red onions and 200 MT of white bulbs already arrived in the country.

According to him, the retail price of red onions is expected to go down between P80 and P100 per kilo with the arrival of the imported bulbs.

The DA has defended the importation of onions amid opposition from farmers' groups, saying it was necessary to tame the high retail price of bulbs.

Farmers' groups warned that the imported bulbs could bring down the farmgate price of onions amid the harvest season.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/28/2424732/da-imported-red-onions-now-markets>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Egg prices could jump 41% this year, USDA says

Associated Press, egg prices / 03:31 PM February 27, 2025



FILE – In this July 28, 2012 file photo, chicken eggs are transported by conveyor belt from the production side to the packaging side at a farm in Cortland, Ind. (Aaron Piper/The Tribune via AP, File)

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Agriculture Department predicts record egg prices could soar more than 40% in 2025, as the Trump administration offered the first new details Wednesday about its plan to battle bird flu and ease costs.

With an emphasis on farms tightening their measures to prevent bird flu's spread, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said the USDA will invest another \$1 billion on top of the roughly \$2 billion it has already spent since the outbreak began in 2022.

The main reason egg prices have climbed — hitting an all-time average high of \$4.95 per dozen this month — is that more than 166 million birds have been slaughtered to limit the virus' spread when cases are found. Most were egg-laying chickens. Just since the start of the year, more than 30 million egg layers have been killed.

What more can farmers do to stop bird flu?

Egg and poultry farmers have already been working since the bird flu outbreak of 2015 to protect their birds by making workers change clothes and shower before entering barns, using separate sets of tools, and sanitizing any vehicles that enter farms. The challenge is that wild birds easily spread the virus.

The USDA is working on identifying the most effective measures farmers can take and helping spot any weaknesses in their plans.

The department has already done biosecurity reviews on about 150 farms and only one had an outbreak afterward, the USDA said, so officials believe more can be done to protect birds and they are going to make those reviews available to more farms. Any farm that has an outbreak now has to undergo a biosecurity audit. And the government will help pay up to 75% of the needed biosecurity improvements.

Egg prices will get much worse this year

The USDA now predicts the cost of eggs will go up 41.1% this year. Just last month, the increase was predicted to be 20%.

And the average prices conceal just how bad the situation is, with consumers paying more than a dollar per egg — over \$12 a dozen — in some places.

Prices have more than doubled since before the outbreak began, costing consumers at least \$1.4 billion last year, according to an estimate by agricultural economists at the University of Arkansas. Restaurants like Denny's and Waffle House started adding surcharges to egg dishes.

Egg prices also normally increase every spring heading into Easter when demand is high.

Will the Trump plan bring down prices?

Rollins acknowledged that it will take some time before consumers see an effect at the checkout counter. It takes infected farms months to dispose of the carcasses, sanitize their farms and raise new birds. But she expressed optimism that the plan will help prices.

“It's going to take a while to get through, I think in the next month or two, but hopefully by summer,” Rollins said.

CoBank analyst Brian Earnest said he appreciates the Trump administration's fresh look at the problem, but "I don't see a whole lot here that is a big change here from the current plan of action."

Major trade groups in the egg, chicken, turkey and dairy industries largely praised the plan. American Egg Board President Emily Metz said she is encouraged the administration wants to find the best response through a combination of biosecurity and exploring vaccine development.

Will DOGE layoffs affect the bird flu fight?

Rollins said she believes the USDA has enough staff to respond to bird flu even after all the cuts to the federal workforce at the direction of Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency.

"Will we have the resources needed to address the plan I just laid out? We are convinced that we will," she said, "as we realign and evaluate where USDA has been spending money, where our employees are spending their time."

Democratic U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar said the new plan is an important step, but USDA needs to confirm it rehired everyone involved in the bird flu response who was mistakenly fired.

Where's the money going?

The plan calls for \$500 million investment to help farmers bolster biosecurity measures, \$400 million in additional aid for farmers whose flocks have been impacted by avian flu, \$100 million to research and potentially develop vaccines and therapeutics for U.S. chicken flocks and explore rolling back what the administration sees as restrictive animal welfare rules in some states like California's cage-free requirement approved by voters. The USDA has already paid farmers roughly \$1.2 billion for the birds they had to slaughter. The additional aid will continue going to those payments and help farmers bring in new flocks more quickly.

The administration is in talks to import about 70-100 million eggs from abroad in the coming months, Rollins said. But there were 7.57 billion table eggs produced last month, so those imports don't appear likely to make a significant difference in the market.

Trump administration officials have suggested that vaccines might help reduce the number of birds that have to be slaughtered when there is an outbreak. However, no vaccines have been fully approved for widespread use in poultry, and the industry has said the current prototypes aren't practical because they require individual shots for each bird. Plus, vaccinated birds could jeopardize exports.

<https://business.inquirer.net/508900/egg-prices-could-jump-41-this-year-usda-says>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Tariffs

FINER POINTS

By Fermin D. Adriano

February 28, 2025

TARIFFS have recently preoccupied international economic discourses as a result of US President Donald Trump's threat to raise duties on countries that have huge trade surpluses vis-à-vis his country. Trump contends that the trade imbalance, resulting in huge fiscal deficits for the US, should be corrected as part of his electoral campaign promise to "Make America Great Again."

Countries that will be immediately affected by the higher tariffs on imported products are Canada, China, Mexico and even those comprising the European Union — the biggest trading partners of the US. They maintain huge trade surpluses, running to billions and even up to a trillion US dollars, because of the insatiable demand of American consumers for imported manufactured goods, services and energy to maintain their high living standards.

Expectedly, the immediate reaction of the threatened countries is to retaliate. They announced that they would similarly impose higher tariffs on US exports, with Canada even launching a campaign to boycott US goods.

Reputable American and non-American economists warned that Trump's decision to impose higher tariffs against trading partners and the latter's response of similarly imposing higher tariffs on US exports will eventually result in a trade war. They said that if a trade war breaks out, everybody will be a loser as this might eventually lead to a global economic recession where every nation in the world will feel the ill-effects.

American economists and policy analysts predicted that raising tariffs would result in higher prices for US consumers and necessarily lead to higher inflation. Economics professor Richard Wolff noted that "tariff" is actually another word for "tax," which consumers will have to pay for the imported product he or she buys. He added that it is not the exporting country (e.g., China, Canada, etc.) that will pay for the tariff but the ordinary consumer in the country importing the product. The result will be higher prices for these commodities and necessarily higher inflation.

Trump and his allies justify that higher prices for American consumers will be a short-term inconvenience. In the long run, he claims that the tariff "bitter pill" will make the US economy stronger and will eventually result in reduced prices. As with other flattery-indulging politicians, the question that they fail to answer is how long will the "short-term" negative consequences last? Also, is there really an iron-clad guarantee that in the long run, the desired effect of lowering prices will be attained? As economics Nobel prize winner John Maynard Keynes said, "In the long run, we are all dead!"

What is the relevance to the Philippines of Trump's decision to adopt the protectionist measure of imposing higher tariffs on major US trading partners and pursuing an autarkic (self-sufficiency) economic policy? It is extremely relevant because our so-called nationalist and leftist ideologues have been promoting this line of thinking for over half a century now. Remember the mantra of

"Philippines for the Filipinos" in the 1960s? The unflinching belief among leftists and populists that we can be self-sufficient in rice (and other agricultural products) because the country has a "predominantly agricultural economy"? Don't they all sound very "Trumpist"?

If Trump's economic doctrine fails with the US having the biggest economy and one of the largest land areas in the world, it will be undeniable proof that what our nationalist, populist and leftist ideologues have been harping about are seriously flawed ideas. The case of rice provides an excellent example: leftist and populist ideologues insist on imposing higher tariffs on rice imports to protect our farmers. It is now obvious that from the Trump experience, the tariffs (tax) are paid by Filipino consumers and not by the government. Filipinos end up paying higher prices for rice. It can be argued that it will protect Filipino palay cultivators. This is true in the short-term because imported rice will be more expensive than the local produce. The problem is if our rice-producing neighbors become more efficient due to the adoption of modern farming technologies, this will result in lower rice export prices. Will the Philippines then keep increasing its tariffs so that our local farmers remain protected?

The solution implemented by China and Vietnam (discussed in my previous columns) was to gradually open their agricultural sectors to competition as a way of promoting greater efficiency among their farmers. Imposing higher tariffs on rice imports is a lazy man's solution to protect Filipino farmers from cheap imports.

What should have been undertaken by the government as it lowered tariffs is that it should have assiduously done its homework of making our palay farmers competitive by consolidating farms to promote economies of scale, adopting modern farm technologies in those clustered farms and sustaining investments in research, development and extension to regularly upgrade farmer capabilities.

Those require a lot of work, both at the national and particularly local government levels. Unfortunately, only a handful of our officials will seriously exert efforts knowing that there are more profitable rent-seeking activities that they can engage in during their three-year tenures before the next election happens.

Not surprisingly, the interest of our officials and politicians is in the construction of farm-to-market roads, irrigation and flood control projects and distributing "ayuda," etc., rather than engaging in the honest-to-goodness effort of upgrading the capabilities of our farmers to become more efficient and making them competitive through the extension of knowledge on modern farm technologies. In such a situation, the unintended result of the rice self-sufficiency obsession is actually the reverse: an ever-increasing deficit in our rice supply as low farm productivity cannot keep pace with rapid population growth and the gradual but sure march of our agricultural sector to the economic abyss.

Trump's protectionist economic policy will surely have the same effect on the US economy.

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<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/28/business/top-business/tariffs/2064186>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Govt expands affordable rice program nationwide through LGU partnerships

Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz

February 27, 2025

The Marcos administration, through the National Food Authority (NFA), has ramped up the procurement of palay from local farmers this summer harvest season, enabling the government to sell rice at a lower price of P33 per kilo, a senior lawmaker said on Thursday.

Camarines Sur Rep. LRay Villafuerte, in a statement, said this initiative benefits local government units (LGUs) such as CamSur, Kadiwa centers, and other government-run outlets.

Villafuerte said that his province, along with several LGUs in Metro Manila, is among the initial partners of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in implementing this program. The initiative follows the DA's recent declaration of a food security emergency—upon the recommendation of the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC)—to stabilize rice prices nationwide.

“In partnership with the DA, NFA, and FTI [Food Terminal Inc.], the provincial government, along with several LGUs in Metro Manila, is selling cheaper rice as part of the President's commitment to fight elevated inflation by, among others, enabling Filipino consumers to buy rice acquired by the NFA at more affordable prices,” Villafuerte said.

He emphasized that the program is not limited to CamSur and the National Capital Region (NCR) but will eventually expand nationwide as more LGUs partner with the DA, NFA, and FTI. Under the scheme, sellers are allowed a markup of P2 per kilo, capping the price at P35 per kilo.

Villafuerte confirmed that the CamSur provincial government will distribute the P33-per-kilo rice at the Provincial Capitol in Pili, Kadiwa outlets, and through participating LGUs in the province.

Villafuerte, representing the CamSur provincial government, attended the ceremonial turnover of the initial rice stocks from DA Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel to LGU partners at an NFA warehouse in Valenzuela City on February 19. San Juan City Mayor Francis Zamora, president of the Metro Manila Council (MMC), also attended on behalf of NCR LGUs.

“Although CamSur is the country's No. 6 rice producer, we must not forget that our farmers are also rice consumers, so the cheaper rice at P33 a kilo will benefit both our consumers and our palay growers,” Villafuerte said. “Hence, this is a good program to stabilize prices to protect our consumers and raise the incomes of our farmers.”

He said that CamSur's initial allocation is 25,000 sacks of rice, and this project will benefit an estimated 250,000 people in his province.

According to the DA, at least 67 LGUs, including CamSur and several NCR LGUs, have expressed their intent to join this program.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/27/govt-expands-affordable-rice-program-nationwide-through-lgu-partnerships/>