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MANILA BULLETIN:

Philippines faces potential egg shortage; DA taking steps to mitigate

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Feb 3, 2025 05:48 AM

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is ramping up its initiatives to prevent a potential egg shortage and the subsequent price surge in the Philippines.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel warned that the country is facing a potential shortage by April after many egg-laying hens were culled in 2024, impacting this year's supply.

Local producers opted to cull their layers last year following oversupply and weak demand that led to lower egg prices.

While the Philippines has not experienced a widespread bird flu outbreak, Laurel said the DA is also taking preemptive measures to avert such a threat.

He noted that a potential outbreak in the country could result in the culling of millions of egg-laying chickens.

In the United States (US), where the bird flu is currently impacting its poultry industry, more than 20 million egg-laying chickens were culled in the last quarter of 2024 alone.

Based on initial estimates by the US Department of Agriculture, the industry has incurred approximately \$1.4 billion in losses due to the outbreak.

To mitigate repercussions for consumers, the DA announced that it is expediting the importation of egg-laying chickens to curb a possible shortage.

"We still have time, so there is a chance we could avert this," said Laurel.

With this, he is urging financial institutions such as LandBank and the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) to provide funding support for the industry's repopulation efforts.

Laurel is also pushing the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for its immediate approval of avian influenza vaccines to reduce the risks of bird flu.

This is in addition to the P300 million sought by the National Livestock Program (NLP) for vaccine testing, which the DA is actively working on to secure funding.

The agency anticipates that a mass inoculation, once it is funded, can begin as early as March.

The Agriculture Secretary said taking these initiatives early on ensures stable egg production and food security in the coming months.

https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/3/da-takes-initiative-to-prevent-potential-egg-shortage-price-surge#google_vignette

MANILA BULLETIN:

Seizing opportunities for inclusive growth

BY [MANILA BULLETIN](#)

Feb 3, 2025 00:03 AM



The Philippines' 5.6 percent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in 2024, while a testament to the economy's resilience, fell short of the government's target of at least six percent. This modest growth rate underscores the challenges the country faces amid global economic headwinds and domestic constraints. For a nation aspiring to uplift its most vulnerable population, this growth figure is more than a statistic—it is a reflection of the opportunities missed to create jobs, reduce poverty, and improve the quality of life for millions of Filipinos. It is imperative to address both external and internal challenges while implementing concrete measures to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth.

For the most needy families, the 5.6 percent growth rate highlights the insufficient pace of progress needed to significantly reduce poverty and inequality. The poorest households, who rely heavily on stable employment and affordable goods, continue to bear the brunt of high inflation and limited access to opportunities. A higher growth rate, ideally above six percent, is crucial to generating more jobs, increasing incomes, and funding social programs that directly benefit the marginalized. Without accelerated growth, the gap between the rich and the poor risks widening further, perpetuating cycles of poverty.

The Philippines' ability to hurdle external and internal challenges is vital to achieving its economic potential. Externally, the country must navigate a volatile global environment marked by slowing trade, rising interest rates, and supply chain disruptions. Internally, issues such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, inadequate infrastructure, and uneven regional development continue to hinder progress. It is imperative to adopt policy reforms, make strategic investments, and enable good governance.

First: Boost infrastructure development. Accelerating the Build Better More program and other infrastructure projects will not only create jobs but also enhance connectivity and productivity. Improved transportation networks, digital infrastructure, and energy systems are critical to attracting investments and supporting industries.

Second: Strengthen agriculture and food security. The agricultural sector, which employs a significant portion of the population, remains underdeveloped. Investing in modern farming technologies, irrigation systems, and supply chain logistics can increase productivity, stabilize food prices, and reduce rural poverty.

Third: Enhance education and skills training. A skilled workforce is essential to driving innovation and competitiveness. Expanding access to quality education and vocational training programs will equip Filipinos with the skills needed for higher-paying jobs in emerging industries.

Fourth: Attract foreign investments. Streamlining regulatory processes, ensuring policy consistency, and offering competitive incentives can make the Philippines a more attractive destination for foreign investors. Focus should be placed on high-growth sectors such as renewable energy, technology, and manufacturing.

Fifth: Promote regional development. Addressing the uneven distribution of economic opportunities requires targeted interventions in lagging regions. Decentralizing economic activities and empowering local governments can spur growth outside Metro Manila and create more inclusive development.

The 5.6 percent GDP growth is a reminder that while the Philippines has made strides, much work remains to be done.

To remain competitive with ASEAN neighbors, the Philippines must also address structural bottlenecks and leverage its strengths. Countries like Vietnam and Indonesia have outpaced the Philippines in attracting manufacturing investments due to their more business-friendly environments and robust infrastructure. The Philippines can learn from their success by improving ease of doing business, reducing red tape, and fostering public-private partnerships. Additionally, the country should capitalize on its young, English-speaking workforce and growing IT-BPO sector to position itself as a regional hub for innovation and services.

The time to act is now—for the sake of the most needy families and the nation’s collective progress.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/3/seizing-opportunities-for-inclusive-growth>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Food, health and education



DEMAND AND SUPPLY - Boo Chanco - The Philippine Star

February 3, 2025 | 12:00am

President BBM should be worried by now about his failure to deliver the most important basic needs of food, health and education. Given limited resources, a good part of which is lost in corruption-related pork funds, BBM must focus on significant deliverables in the basics as his administration reaches its midpoint this year.

Government exists on the basis of a social compact. Failure violates this reason for being. What good is a government that consistently fails the Filipino people in providing essentials like food, health services and education?

SWS released a survey last week indicating that food, health and education together with creating more job opportunities are the top issues people are concerned about.

The PSA announced that the full-year 2024 GDP growth rate was 5.6 percent, missing the government's own target of a minimum six percent. The economic managers are quick to point out that at least we are the third fastest growing economy in the region.

That's not even a good consuelo-de-bobo. The real story behind that number tells us how our economy has shrunk since the pandemic. UP economist JC Punongbayan explains it this way:

“The latest economic figures tell us that we're now on a permanently lower growth trajectory. Our national income now is a lot lower than what it could've been, and this trend seems to be robust. We're nowhere near going back to the old trajectory. The pandemic permanently scarred the Phl economy. Imagine a car that veered off-course and hasn't found its way back to the main road for four years straight. Sad, because other countries like Vietnam and Singapore have long gone back on track.”

According to Dr. Punongbayan, “to get back to the pre-pandemic track by 2028, the end of Marcos' term, we need 11.4 percent growth annually from 2025 to 2028! Really quite impossible.”

Impossible, given the way the leadership has neglected the issues that count and allowed its greedy political allies to institutionalize plunder in the National Budget.

The worst part of our GDP story is the shameful agriculture output dwindling to an eight-year low in 2024, falling by 2.2 percent to P1.725 trillion. PSA data showed that the combined value was the lowest since the P1.722 trillion recorded in 2016 and was also 2.2 percent lower than 2023's P1.76 trillion. PSA data also showed that the rate of decline in the value of the agriculture and fisheries production last year was the steepest since 2000 when the time series began.

OK, they have an excuse... unfavorable weather conditions curbed production nationwide. It isn't as if El Niño is unexpected. By this time, our government should have put in place measures that will mitigate the effects of this regular weather phenomenon. Same with typhoons.

The value of livestock production declined by 4.25 percent year-on-year, blamed as usual on the African swine fever. How many years has this been the problem?

As for fisheries output value, it fell by 1.1 percent, according to the PSA, forcing us to import even galunggong. So embarrassing for a country that is surrounded by seas.

The really terrible thing is that government measures to reduce the retail price of rice failed because there was no political will to control the greedy agricultural cartels. The reduction in tariff for imported rice and the lower world prices were not passed on to the consumers. The government helplessly watched the bloated profits of the rice cartel happen.

The solution of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. is to declare a food security emergency to address the spiking retail prices of rice. BBM said this declaration is needed for the market to work properly. If all that declaration will do is allow NFA to sell its rice stocks at a loss, success is likely limited. Sending cartel operators to jail is the only way BBM can see results.

As for health, Congress with the approval of Malacañang gave PhilHealth zero budget for 2025. They claim there is enough money in PhilHealth's coffers to even provide for expanded benefits. But that's just a praise release. That's not being felt on the ground. Indeed, hospitals have been complaining that their collectibles from PhilHealth continue to rise.

Here is how a Jesuit priest working at PGH describes in a Facebook post, how bad it is in a premier government hospital:

“PGH OutPatient Department at 4:30- 5:00 a.m.: A reflection of our country's healthcare system. Sick people, many are on wheelchairs and some on stretcher beds are crowding near the entrance hoping to get earlier slots, and still, many are lining up along Padre Faura Street hoping to get inside when the door is opened. With zero additional budget for PhilHealth for 2025, and using the P90 billion PhilHealth savings to fund corruption in pork barrel projects, instead of expanding health programs to include out-patients, what can we expect for this year 2025?”

Where are the regional specialty hospitals BBM promised so people don't have the added expense of going to NCR to avail of the services of the Heart Center, Kidney Center, Lung Center and other government hospitals? BBM should build on the accomplishments of his mother by getting those regional hospitals up.

As for education, Secretary Sonny Angara and the EDCOM are moving as fast as they can to improve outcomes. But the damage from years of neglect and corruption will take years for any meaningful improvement to be realized. In other words, we have lost generations of Filipinos who were badly educated by our public schools. With little marketable skills, they will be dependent on ayudas from corrupt politicians for the rest of their lives.

But are our officials even worried they are failing our people in food, health and education to stop the grand stealing of our taxes and borrowed money to fund their pork barrel greed? Not by the way they crafted the 2025 budget.

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

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/02/03/2418708/food-health-and-education>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Bishops' stand on commercial fishing ruling welcomed

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

February 3, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor yesterday welcomed the support of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), after at least 48 bishops expressed opposition to the decision of the Supreme Court (SC) allowing commercial fishing vessels access to municipal waters, previously reserved for small-scale fishers under the Fisheries Code.

"The bishops' pastoral letter will be read at all Masses today (Feb. 2) in churches/dioceses under the jurisdiction of the signatory-bishops," Montemayor said.

He said the bishops expressed their deep concern about the ruling's devastating impacts on artisanal and municipal fisherfolk who have preferential access to the fishing zone.

"Members of CBCP have expressed solidarity with municipal fisherfolk, amid the recent ruling of the Supreme Court's first division, allowing exploitation of most municipal waters by large-scale commercial fishing operators," Montemayor added.

A highlight of the proceedings was the reading of the bishops' statement on the issue by Reverend Gerardo Alminaza, vice chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Social Action, Justice and Peace, under the CBCP.

For her part, Oceana vice president Gloria Estenzo Ramos said 90 percent of municipal waters of most coastal towns are at risk of exploitation by commercial fishers equipped with active and often destructive fishing gear.

"The consequences are dire, depleted fish stocks, loss of critical spawning grounds, and worsening poverty and hunger among already marginalized communities. The ruling will exacerbate existing inequalities and further poverty and displacement among fishing communities," Ramos said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has also expressed concern over the SC decision, and warned of the potential adverse effects on the livelihood of small fishers and its impact on marine ecosystems.

Tiu Laurel said the Department of Agriculture, through the Office of the Solicitor General, has filed a motion for reconsideration with the SC to overturn its decision.

The SC's First Division had upheld a Malabon Regional Trial Court decision declaring the Fisheries Code's preferential access provisions unconstitutional. The petition was filed by Mercidar Fishing Corp.

Tiu Laurel, whose family operates one of the biggest commercial fishing enterprises in the country, cited the DA's efforts to support small fishers.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/03/2418801/bishops-stand-commercial-fishing-ruling-welcomed>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Study legality of food security emergency – group

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

February 3, 2025 | 12:00am



Farmers harvest palay at a rice field in Lingayen, Pangasinan on February 2, 2025.

Cesar Ramirez / The Philippine STAR

MANILA, Philippines — Farmers’ group Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) yesterday asked the Department of Agriculture (DA) to fully study the legality of the food security emergency amid its impending declaration.

FFF national manager Raul Montemayor said that the DA should review the propriety of the plans to reduce rice prices, saying these measures should not sacrifice the interests of farmers.

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

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. on Friday said that he expects to declare a food security emergency tomorrow after he formally received the approved resolution of the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) on Jan. 30 recommending its declaration.

This will enable the National Food Authority (NFA) to release its rice stocks, currently around 300,000 metric tons or six million bags through local government units (LGUs) and Kadiwa stores.

Montemayor said NFA will account for almost 25 percent of the Metro Manila rice market, if it proceeds with its plan to unload 30,000 tons of its buffer stocks per month.

He added that while the disposal of NFA rice may decongest its warehouses to accommodate incoming harvests, the agency's P9 billion procurement fund for 2025 can absorb just four percent of palay output in the first semester alone.

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

According to Montemayor, the DA should clarify its basis for possibly declaring a food security emergency.

At the same time, Montemayor questioned the failure of the DA and other government agencies to go after importers, wholesalers and traders who were clearly profiteering by selling rice at high prices despite the fact that import costs had gone down following the 20 percent cut in rice tariffs in July 2024.

Executive Order 62 lowered the tariff on imported rice to 15 percent from the previous 35 percent.

Montemayor also asked Congress to address inconsistencies and gaps in the newly enacted Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Law and amendments to the RTL.

Tiu Laurel gave assurance that the DA can justify the legality of the food security emergency if it will be questioned in court but warned the procurement of palay from farmers may be affected if the NFA fails to release its aging stocks.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/03/2418831/study-legality-food-security-emergency-group>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

What egg shortage? Producers see glut

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

February 3, 2025 | 12:00am



A vendor is arranging eggs for sale at a store in Manila on Jan. 26, 2023.

The STAR / Walter Bollozos, File

MANILA, Philippines — Egg producers allayed fears of a possible shortage of egg supply, saying oversupply is even expected as production this year will exceed the total output in 2024.

In a chance interview at the weekend in Quezon City, Philippine Egg Board Association president Francis Uyehara said for the first quarter of 2025 alone, they see a 15 percent increase in egg production.

“We don’t have a shortage when it comes to table eggs in April or May. We are even expecting an oversupply this year as our production this year is projected to exceed the production last year,” Uyehara said.

He added that egg producers will schedule a meeting with Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. to clarify the issue.

“We don’t know who gave that information to the Secretary as we have regular meetings with him with the group of Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. We gave regular consultation on this issue. We don’t know the source of the information as we are also surprised about the news (on the possible egg shortage),” Uyehara said.

He warned that traders may take advantage of the situation and would implement unnecessary increases in the retail price of eggs.

Uyehara said that the farmgate price of medium sized eggs remains low between P5.60 and P6.40 per piece, adding that the retail price of eggs should not exceed P8 per piece.

Based on monitoring of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Metro Manila markets, the retail price of medium sized eggs ranged between P7.30 and P9 per piece.

“The farmers suffered losses last summer in 2024. As a result, they decreased their production. The effect was experienced in June, July, August, September. When the retail price of eggs started to go up last year, our egg producers started to repopulate with the expected increase in demand during the holidays,” Uyehara added.

According to Uyehara, starting November 2024, the retail price of eggs has stabilized as there was already sufficient supply.

“During the months of November and December last year, there was ample supply of table eggs,” he said. Uyehara noted that starting January this year, there has been an oversupply of eggs as the consumption abruptly decreased after the Christmas season.

He said that the farmgate price of eggs has decreased by P1 per piece after the demand in December 2024. At the same time, Uyehara said that the bird flu being experienced in Europe and United States where the parent stocks layers are sourced will not affect the production this year as egg producers were able to import at least 700,000 parent stocks last year.

Uyehara said that what is needed is to fast-track approval of the avian influenza vaccine to protect the poultry population.

Pork max SRP not needed

Hog farmers’ group National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. (NatFed) said there is no need to implement maximum suggested retail price (SRP) on pork after the DA said that it is considering its imposition amid the high retail price in the markets.

In an interview, NatFed vice chairman Alfred Ng added that the SRP was not proven effective in bringing down the retail price of farm products.

“There is really a disconnect between the retail price and the farmgate of liveweight,” Ng said.

Ng noted that the farmgate price only ranged between P220 and P240 per kilo but based on the monitoring of the DA, pork is still sold for as high as P460 per kilo.

According to Ng, traders want additional profits, causing the high retail price of pork.

At the same time, he said that the demand for pork is expected to continue until May and June because of the midterm elections.

“It’s a campaign period, so politicians release funds whether it is local government units or national, people have extra funds to buy pork,” he added.

Ng said that the retail price of pork is expected to go down as the hog producers, particularly those in Batangas, started to repopulate after being affected by the African swine fever last year.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/03/2418843/what-egg-shortage-producers-see-glut>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Reconsider food security emergency, DA urged

By: [Gillian Villanueva](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:50 AM February 03, 2025



Inquirer file photo

MANILA, Philippines — Fearing that the lowering of rice prices may affect the earnings of local growers, a farmers’ group on Sunday urged the Department of Agriculture (DA) to “fully study” its plan to declare a national food security emergency.

In a statement, the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) said that with the scheduled declaration of such an emergency on rice supply on Tuesday, the National Food Authority (NFA) would be able to release its stocks, currently around 300,000 metric tons (MT) or six million bags, for resale at below-market prices through local government units and Kadiwa stores.

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

He added that while the disposal of NFA rice stocks would allow the agency to decongest its warehouses and procure more supplies, its “P9-billion procurement fund for 2025 can absorb just 4 percent of the palay output in the first semester alone.”

“Additionally, few farmers actually manage to sell their palay to NFA because they lack access to dryers and postharvest facilities needed to comply with the agency’s strict grain quality standards,” Montemayor noted.

The group also questioned the DA’s reasoning for declaring a food security emergency since prices for well-milled and regular-milled rice have already started to decline, based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).



Duterte ‘in no rush’ to be president, it’s someone else | INQToday

Citing PSA figures, FFF said the price of well-milled rice spiked in September 2023 and reached its peak in March 2024 at P56.44 a kilo.

“Since then, prices have declined, averaging P54.38 per kilo in December 2024. Prices for regular-milled rice showed a similar trend,” the group said.

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

The group urged the DA to go after importers, wholesalers and traders who are selling rice at high prices despite a 20-percent cut in tariffs.

It also called on Congress to address the gaps in the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, which classifies agricultural smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, and engaging in a cartel as economic sabotage, and the rice tariffication law that lowered the import taxes on rice coming from abroad in a bid to help lower domestic prices.

Cartel probe

Last December, Marikina City Rep. Stella Quimbo suggested that the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) be prodded to conduct a formal investigation into the possible rice cartel in the country.

This followed suspicions of several members of the House of Representatives quinta committee, the super committee looking into the problems of the agricultural sector, that rice importers and traders were colluding to manipulate rice prices even after import tariffs were reduced and following an oversupply of rice in the country.

“May I move that we direct the PCC to open a formal investigation on a possible rice cartel, and also provide PCC access to whatever information is obtained through this committee hearing,” Quimbo said during the quinta committee hearing.

Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga, chair of the House committee in agriculture and food, then directed the panel secretariat to act on Quimbo’s motion.

Quimbo pointed out the disconnect between market conditions and prices, based on PSA data.

For instance, she cited government data showing that the country had an estimated 2.5 million MT of rice stock inventory last year, 25 percent higher than the 2023 level, yet prices remained high.

The lawmaker claimed that while importers and traders benefited about P13 billion from the reduced rice import tariffs, hoarding the stocks may have been the cause of the staple food’s high prices.

[https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2030783/reconsider-food-security-emergency-dar-ged?utm_source=\(direct\)&utm_medium=gallery](https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2030783/reconsider-food-security-emergency-dar-ged?utm_source=(direct)&utm_medium=gallery)

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

PCIC teams up with GCash for digital payouts

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:05 AM February 03, 2025

The Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) has partnered with e-wallet platform GCash to fast-track indemnity payments to insured farmers nationwide.

A memorandum of agreement signed between PCIC, an enterprise under the supervision of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Ayala Group's GCash formalized their partnership on streamlining the payout system.

“In line with the government's financial inclusion agenda, this initiative provides farmers with easy access to financial tools and services, even in remote areas,” the DA said in a statement over the weekend.

“It envisions to uplift agricultural communities and ensure resilience, inclusivity and innovation for farmers nationwide,” it added.

The accord aims to eliminate delays and address inefficiencies associated with issuing physical checks by depositing payments directly into farmer-beneficiaries' GCash accounts using the latter's Funds Disbursement Service (FDS).

FDS is a GCash self-service disbursement tool that allows the release of funds to GCash accounts in real time.

GCash's digital ecosystem will be introduced to insured farmers, enabling them to save, invest and access microfinancing tools for resilience and financial growth.

“This innovation not only aligns with the government's goal of financial inclusivity but also supports PCIC's push for digitalization and process efficiency,” PCIC president Jovy Bernabe said.

“Your commitment to this partnership demonstrates our shared goal of empowering the agricultural sector through innovation. Together, we are paving the way for a more resilient and financially inclusive future for our farmers and fisherfolk,” Bernabe said.

PCIC is the implementing agency of the government’s agricultural insurance program. Its mandate is to provide insurance protection to farmers against losses arising from natural calamities, plant diseases and pest infestations of their palay, corn and other crops.

The state firm also protects insured farmers against damage to or loss of noncrop agricultural assets, including but not limited to farm machines, equipment, transport facilities and other related infrastructure.

PCIC offers insurance products that cover rice and corn crops, high-value crops, noncrop agricultural assets, livestock, fisheries and credit as well as life term.

<https://business.inquirer.net/504481/pcic-teams-up-with-gcash-for-digital-payouts>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Poll: Inflation likely eased to 2.8% in January

February 3, 2025 | 12:33 am



Canned goods are on display at a supermarket in Quezon City. — PHILIPPINE STAR/MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

By **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**, *Reporter*

HEADLINE INFLATION may have eased in January amid lower electricity rates and food prices, analysts said.

A *BusinessWorld* poll of 16 analysts yielded a median estimate of 2.8% for the consumer price index (CPI) in January.

This is within the 2.5%-3.3% forecast of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) for the month and the 2-4% target range.

If realized, January inflation would have eased from 2.9% in December and matched the 2.8% print a year ago.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) is set to release January inflation data on Feb. 5 (Wednesday).

“We expect headline inflation to ease, driven by lower food price inflation, while a decline in electricity generation rates partly offset a pickup in retail fuel prices,” Nomura Global Markets Research analyst Euben Paracuelles said.

Bank of the Philippine Islands Lead Economist Emilio S. Neri, Jr. said food inflation has been steady “largely due to reports that rice prices have declined versus prior months with favorable supply prospects following the end of El Niño.”

Rice inflation sharply slowed to 0.8% in December from 5.1% in November and 19.6% a year prior.

The PSA earlier noted the possibility of rice inflation turning negative in January.

“We expect headline inflation to decelerate on the back of retail rice prices falling to P37 per kilogram and electricity prices easing,” HSBC economist for ASEAN Aris D. Dacanay said.

Manila Electric Co. lowered the overall rate by P0.2189 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) to P11.7428 per kWh in January from P11.9617 per kWh in December.

OIL **PRICE** **HIKES**
On the other hand, analysts flagged risks that could stoke inflation, such as fuel costs.

“While electricity rates eased on the back of lower generation charges, domestic fuel prices were up over three straight weeks in January due to higher global oil prices,” Sarah Tan, an economist from Moody’s Analytics, said.

In January, pump price adjustments stood at a net increase of P2.65 a liter for gasoline, P4.80 a liter for diesel and P3.80 a liter for kerosene.

Mr. Dacanay said inflation could have eased further if not for other non-core components.

“For instance, retail fuel prices continue to climb due to a strong US dollar, while pork prices jumped as the increase in African Swine Flu cases took a toll on supply,” he said.

“Higher prices were observed for fuel as well as for key food items such as vegetables, meat, fish, and fruits,” Chinabank said.

Food inflation could have also reflected the impact of storm damage late last year, Ms. Tan said.

“Flood damage knocked food production in the final months of 2024, stoking inflation. These upward price pressures are expected to linger into the opening month of the new year,” she added.

Several storms hit the country in the fourth quarter, leading to billions of pesos worth of agricultural damage. The combined effects of tropical cyclones Kristine and Leon resulted in P9.81 billion in agriculture losses.

“Further, water rates were also upwardly revised as of Jan. 1, which will add to households’ and businesses’ utility bills through the year,” Ms. Tan said.

“The higher water rates are said to contribute to the expansion of water service and infrastructure projects,” she added.

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System Regulatory Office had approved a P5.95-per-cubic-meter increase for Manila Water Co., Inc. and P7.32 per cubic meter for Maynilad Water Services, Inc., starting January.

“The annual adjustment in water rates in Metro Manila, along with the increase in sin taxes also added to upward price pressures,” Chinabank Research said.

INFLATION

In the coming months, inflation is seen to continue settling within the 2-4% target range.

“Looking ahead, inflation will likely remain within target, barring new shocks,” Chinabank Research said.

The BSP projects inflation to average 3.3% this year. Even accounting for risks, it sees inflation potentially hitting 3.4%.

“On a monthly basis, we may see headline inflation bottom out at 2.4% year on year in February and a slight decline from December... as heavyweight CPI housing rental, electricity, water, and gas ease to less than 2%,” Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion, chief economist at Union Bank of the Philippines, said.

“Moving forward, we expect the government’s ongoing efforts to manage rice supply to bring overall inflation down in the next few months,” Mr. Dacanay said.

The government implemented a maximum suggested retail price on imported rice in Metro Manila in late January to address elevated prices.

The within-target inflation outlook will allow the BSP to continue its rate-cutting cycle, analysts said.

“This will support further monetary policy easing in the Philippines, reducing the pressure on the budgets of households and businesses,” Ms. Tan said.

“This favorable inflation outlook, along with the weaker-than-expected GDP growth in the fourth quarter, supports the case for another interest rate cut by the BSP in its upcoming policy meeting this month,” Chinabank Research said.

Security Bank Corp. Vice-President and Research Division Head Angelo B. Taningco said he expects the BSP to deliver a 25-basis-point (bp) rate cut at its first meeting for the year as inflation is likely within the 2-4% target range in January and fourth-quarter growth was weaker than expected.

Sun Life Investment Management and Trust Corp. economist Patrick M. Ella said the latest growth outturn will be a “larger consideration” for the BSP.

The Philippine economy grew by a slower-than-expected 5.2% in the fourth quarter, bringing full-year 2024 growth to 5.6%. This falls short of the government’s 6-6.5% target.

“We think the BSP will have to cut 25 bps for the first Monetary Board meeting this year. The weakness in consumption and private investments points to the need for support from the monetary policy side at the moment,” Mr. Ella said.

“This may lead to a weaker peso in the near term but the pressing need to support growth is immediate,” he added.

However, analysts also said that the BSP’s easing cycle may be derailed as risks persist.

OUTLOOK

Ms. Tan said the pace of further easing may be more moderate than last year.

“We’re looking at two quarter-point rate cuts by December, with the first coming through in mid-2025 at the earliest,” she said.

“The BSP will be prudent in monitoring global developments that could reflate inflation and weaken the strength of the peso,” she added.

Mr. Neri likewise expects the central bank to deliver just 50 bps worth of cuts this year.

“That said, we continue to see risks that could limit the BSP’s rate cuts to just 50 bps this year,” he said.

“If BSP becomes too aggressive with easing, the peso could be subject to sizable exchange market pressure, which, in turn, could fuel inflation expectations.” The peso has been under pressure in the past few months, sinking to the record-low P59-per-dollar level thrice in 2024.

Ms. Tan expects the Monetary Board to keep rates steady at its Feb. 13 meeting as it will likely remain cautious.

BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. has signaled the possibility of up to 50 bps worth of rate cuts this year.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2025/02/03/650503/poll-inflation-likely-eased-to-2-8-in-january/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Down to Earth touts regenerative farming

February 3, 2025 | 12:03 am



PHILIPPINE STAR/EDD GUMBAN

By **Adrian H. Halili**, *Reporter*

SPECIALTY vegetables and herb growers Down to Earth said it is seeking to enhance agricultural practices through regenerative farming methods.

“Regenerative agriculture is a growing practice that centers mostly on soil building,” Nicolo Aberasturi, founder and owner of Down to Earth, told *BusinessWorld*.

Mr. Aberasturi added that his practice focuses on using ruminant animals to boost soil health.

“We use ruminant animals to cycle the supposed to be weeds or grass in the farm.,” he said. “You are actually adding, building up your soil.”

He added that grass or weeds that are normally growing in farms would be fed to animals like pigs or cattle, while their manure fertilizes the soil.

Regenerative agriculture is also a means of improving water quality and biodiversity.

“Even (organic farming) can destroy the structure of the soil even if there are no chemicals used,” he said.

“Every time you damage the soil, you deplete the soil structure and the quality of the minerals in the soil that plants need,” he added.

The effects of soil degradation in the Philippines have led to loss of productive topsoil through water erosion, declining soil fertility due to over-cultivation, and reduced vegetation cover due to illegal logging, according to the Bureau of Soils and Water Management.

Mr. Aberasturi said that crops grown using regenerative practices are “more complete in minerals.”

He added the Down to Earth mainly focuses on the growing of specialty vegetables, herbs, and edible flowers, targeting hotels and restaurant owners serving farm to table cuisine.

Down to Earth also sells grass fed beef and other meats from its farms in Tanauan, Batangas, and Dahilayan, Bukidnon. It also operates a physical store in Mandaluyong.

He said that the business also does small-scale bottling and canning.

“Let’s say, we have an excess of tomatoes, what we do is that we make them into sauce or sun dry them. This is so that the excess is not wasted, and we sell them already bottled,” he said.

Additionally, Mr. Aberasturi said that Down to Earth also trains farmers on regenerative farming methods.

“We are seeing a window of opportunity, and we want to share the technology to other small farms that are just starting,” he said.

He added that repurposing excess harvest for animal feed will reduce post-harvest losses.

“If they have the technology, the excess vegetables we see or read about in the news that are rotting (can be used as) animal feed instead,” he said.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/02/03/650446/down-to-earth-touts-regenerative-farming/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

GCash tapped to disburse farmer indemnities

February 3, 2025 | 12:02 am



PHILIPPINE STAR/KRIZ JOHN ROSALES/PPA POOL

THE Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) said that indemnity payments for farmers may now be directly transferred to their GCash accounts.

In a statement on Sunday, the PCIC said it signed a memorandum of agreement with G-Xchange, Inc., to tap GCash's Funds Disbursement Service for the release of indemnity payments to farmer-beneficiaries.

The PCIC added that this would no longer require farmers to visit PCIC offices to pick up checks. It said that the tie up will streamline the PCIC's payout system and advance the financial inclusion of rural areas.

"This partnership with GCash marks a transformation on how we will deliver our services to farmers, especially in the manner of distributing indemnity payments," PCIC President Jovy C. Bernabe said.

He added that the platform would also allow farmers to manage their finances, giving them cashout options and access to online payments and micro-financing.

The PCIC covers farmers, fisherfolk, and livestock raisers who sustain losses from natural calamities, diseases, pest infestation, and other risks.

The PCIC has a target of covering 1.2 million farmers, 21,000 livestock raisers, as well as fisheries stakeholders. It processed 744,000 claims in 2023. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/02/03/650445/gcash-tapped-to-disburse-farmer-indemnities/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

India unveils long-term programs to boost output of pulses, cotton

February 3, 2025 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI — India will launch a six-year program to boost the output of pulse crops by taking measures including directing state agencies to buy the staple at guaranteed prices, the Finance minister said, citing the need to cut reliance on imports.

Rising demand has forced India, the world's biggest producer and consumer of pulses, to spend a record \$5 billion on importing pulses such as pigeon peas, black matpe, and red lentils in 2024, making the country the world's top importer. India currently imports large amounts of pulses from Canada, Myanmar, Russia, and a host of African countries.

Over the next four years, state agencies will procure pigeon peas, black matpe, and red lentils from farmers at government-set guaranteed, or support, prices, Nirmala Sitharaman said while presenting the annual budget for fiscal year 2025-2026.

Ms. Sitharaman said her government would also aim to boost cotton production, particularly of the extra-long staple variety, by supporting research and development.

India is the world's second-biggest cotton producer, but yields have fallen in recent years, turning the country into a net importer of the fiber, after previously being a net exporter.

Announcing measures to assist millions of farmers grappling with low incomes, Ms. Sitharaman unveiled plans to set up a urea plant with an annual capacity of 1.2 million metric tons to boost supplies of one of the key crop nutrients.

Agriculture employs nearly 45% of the workforce and contributes about 15% to the \$3.5 trillion economy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government will increase the subsidized farm loan limit to 500,000 rupees (\$5,777.94) from the existing 300,000 rupees, Ms. Sitharaman said.

She said the government will also launch a "national mission" to develop high-yielding seed varieties.

Farm policy experts say India, the world's most populous country, needs to develop high-yielding seeds to overcome the problem of shrinking farmland, caused by rapid urbanization and industrialization, and erratic weather patterns. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/02/03/650447/india-unveils-long-term-programs-to-boost-output-of-pulses-cotton/>

ABANTE:

DA chief sablay sa itlog shortage

Abante News

- February 2, 2025



Kinontra ng Philippine Egg Board Association (PEBA) ang babala ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na posibleng magkulang ang suplay ng itlog sa Abril o Mayo kapag nanalasa sa bansa ang bird flu outbreak. Ayon kay Francis Uyehara, presidente ng PEBA, walang inaasahang kakulangan sa suplay ng itlog dahil sapat ang mga pangitlu-ging manok sa bansa.

“Sa ating grupo sa industriya, wala tayong inaasa-hang kakulangan sa itlog sa darating na April at May. Nagulat din kami doon sa detalye na lumabas sa Department of Agriculture,” giit ni Uyehara sa interview ng DZBB nitong Linggo.

“Sa aming projection, meron tayong sapat na supply ng itlog at least hanggang April at May. Mas mataas po ang ating produksyon ng itlog ngayong taon kumpara nu’ng nakaraang taon of the same month,” dugtong pa niya.

Aniya, ang may problema ngayon ay mga broiler o ang mga manok na pinalalaki para katayin. Maaaring ito umano ang tinutukoy ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. at hindi ang mga manok na pinalalaki para mangitlog.

Kung mag-aangkat umano ang DA ng mga nangingitlog na manok, magkakaroon ng oversupply at malaking problema ito sa mga local producer ng itlog.

“Kapag nangyari po iyon magkakaroon po tayo ng talagang oversupply at ‘yun ang papatay sa local producer kasi nga po mayroon tayong sapat na suplay. Ngayon kung dadagdagan nila, magkakaroon ng oversupply,” babala ni Uyehera.

“Ang aking basa rito baka ang Secretary Laurel ay nalito sa dalawang industriya. Ito ang broiler industry at layer industry. Ang alam ko ang broiler ang may kakulangan sa sisiw kasi may problema ang kanilang breeders ngayon. Sila ang nangangailangan ng hatching eggs, hindi po ‘yung layer. So hindi ko alam baka lang nalito ‘yung ating Secretary Laurel o ‘yung kanilang opisina o kung sino ‘yung nagbigay ng direct information doon sa ating mga namumuno sa Department of Agriculture,” paliwanag pa niya.

Tiniyak ni Uyehara na walang inaasahang pagtaas sa presyo ng itlog ngayong taon, maliban kung magkakaroon na naman ng bird flu outbreak. Sa ngayon aniya ay nasa piso na umano ang ibinaba ng farmgate price ng itlog mula noong Kapaskuhan.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/02/02/da-chief-sablay-sa-itlog-shortage/>

MANILA STANDARD:

NFA ready to deploy 300,000 sacks tomorrow to LGUs

By **Manila Standard**

February 3, 2025, 12:25 am

The National Food Authority (NFA) said it is ready for the potential declaration of a food security emergency regarding rice.

NFA Administrator Larry Lacson added that several local government units (LGUs) have shown interest in purchasing NFA rice for distribution once the emergency is officially declared.

“We are prepared. Neighboring regions are already sending rice to Metro Manila, in addition to our current stock. We’re gearing up for this,” Lacson said in a radio interview.

“We’re ready to release the stocks, but I think we’ll hold off a bit before making them available to the LGUs for public sale,” he added.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) previously indicated that NFA rice could be distributed as early as February 4, though the timeline for distribution will depend on local government decisions.

DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier confirmed that his office has received a resolution from the National Price Coordinating Council recommending the emergency declaration.

If the declaration is approved, it would enable the NFA to release buffer stocks and begin purchasing rice from farmers during the upcoming harvest season.

Lacson shared that the initial release will be 300,000 sacks, with the potential to increase to 450,000 to 500,000 sacks, depending on demand from LGUs and Kadiwa stores.

NFA rice will be sold to LGUs at P36 per kilo and to consumers at P38 per kilo, with strict price regulations to prevent retailers from exceeding these amounts.

The National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) earlier approved the proposal of the DA to declare a food emergency.

The DA intends to declare a food security emergency on February 4 to address the soaring prices of rice.

Once declared, the government will release rice stocks to be sold to local government units in Metro Manila.

“Releasing 300,000 metric tons of rice to the market within six months will soften market prices. We hope this will be the start of a more stable pricing for rice,” Tiu-Laurel explained.

The declaration would make NFA rice available to consumers at P38 per kilogram in wet markets, it was disclosed.

The DA has pushed for this measure to help stem the rising retail prices of rice, which is a staple in the Filipino diet.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/top-stories/314553523/nfa-ready-to-deploy-300000-sacks-tomorrow-to-lgus.html>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Crop insurance agency taps GCash for payments

By Giselle P. Jordan

February 3, 2025

THE Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) and GCash have signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to allow the PCIC, a Department of Agriculture-attached agency, to deposit payments directly to member-farmers' GCash accounts.

PCIC President Jovy Bernabe and G-Xchange Inc. President and CEO Oscar Enrico Reyes Jr. signed the contract at the GCash office in Taguig City.

The MOA entails the introduction of GCash's Funds Disbursement Service (FDS), allowing indemnity payments to be deposited in real-time, relieving farmers from delays and inefficiencies of the release of physical checks.

The partnership will link farmers to the GCash digital ecosystem, which will also enable them to save, invest, and access microfinancing tools, thus advancing financial inclusion for more people in the country, especially in rural areas.

"This innovation not only aligns with the government's goal of financial inclusivity but also supports PCIC's push for digitalization and process efficiency," Bernabe said. "It is a step towards empowering our farmers.

"GCash's commitment to this partnership demonstrates our shared goal of empowering the agricultural sector through innovation. Together, we are paving the way for a more resilient and financially inclusive future for our farmers and fisherfolk," he added.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/02/03/business/top-business/crop-insurance-agency-taps-gcash-for-payments/2048495>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Amid DA warning, group says no egg shortage

Ada Pelonia

February 3, 2025

THE Philippine Egg Board Association (PEBA) assured the public of sufficient egg supply for the year amid concerns about a possible shortage of the cheapest protein source.

This, after Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. recently said the agency forecasts a potential shortage of eggs by April due to an overproduction last year that dragged down farmgate prices to as low as P4 per piece and pushed producers to cull their chickens to offset losses.

“We don’t project a shortage [of eggs]. On the contrary, we project an oversupply this year,” PEBA President Francis Uyehara told reporters in an interview on Friday.

Uyehara explained that while producers did incur losses during the summer of last year, they started to repopulate after a price hike in eggs was seen from June to September.

“Because prices rose during those months, our industry friends started to repopulate...So, in November [and] December the prices of eggs started to stabilize,” he said, speaking partly in Filipino.

However, Uyehara noted the eroding demand for eggs following the holiday season, which left a huge supply from last month.

“Because demand significantly declined for table eggs [after new year], the supply of eggs remained high coming from December.”

Despite this, Uyehara mentioned that the country’s egg supply could be compromised if there were massive local outbreaks of avian influenza (AI), stressing the need to fast-track the availability of bird flu vaccines.

“For this year, we don’t see a shortage of table eggs unless we experience local massive outbreaks of bird flu, which we don’t have now,” he said.

“That’s why it’s important to us, that for the layer industry, that availability of the AI vaccine...is ensured; that’s our security.”

The agency recently said that the long-awaited bird flu vaccines are expected to hurdle field trials by the end of March this year.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the trial results for AI vaccines would be presented to the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) through the Veterinary Technical Advisory Committee (VTAC), which would then be endorsed to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

“By the end of this quarter, the two trials would be concluded and then the application for approval will be sent to the FDA,” de Mesa said.

He noted that the vaccines undergoing field trials came from companies in Hungary and Germany.

Laurel said that if the vaccine comes out in March, the agency would allot P300 million which could procure 30 million doses.

Industry groups have been lobbying for bird flu vaccines given their international availability which were proven effective against the transboundary animal disease.

Retail prices of medium white eggs ranged from P7 to P9 per piece, based on the latest government price monitoring report.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/03/amid-da-warning-group-says-no-egg-shortage/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Fungal diseases cripple small banana farms

Ada Pelonia

February 3, 2025

Fungal diseases, including the dreaded Fusarium wilt, wiped out half of banana plantations tilled by smallholder farmers in the Philippines, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the spread of Banana Fusarium Wilt Tropical Race 4 (TR4) disease and black sigatoka caused local smallholder farms, pegged at 90,000 hectares, to shrink by 50 percent. Smallholder farmers account for about 40 percent of the country's banana growers.

"The commercial farms are already coping, and they are replanting. Our main concern is the smallholder farms," Laurel told reporters in a recent interview.

For instance, he said the Tagum Agricultural Development Co. Inc. (Tadeco) had come up with measures that curbed the spread of fungal diseases.

"I went to Tadeco and they have shown me that they have been able to contain the diseases through better planting material, use of new fungicides...it's basically fungicides spraying at more intervals."

Laurel noted that the company also has a set of protocols and packages in case of infestation, which include treating the soil, replanting, and applying tea tree oil to prevent Panama disease.

"We have to train and give this package or protocols to the smallholder farmers to educate them and to enable them to apply the techniques used by corporate farmers," he said.

"Companies like Tadeco will be giving us all the data they have—how they were able to do it and we will do a package per hectare for smallholder farms."

Exports

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) recently noted that the Philippines had been dislodged as the third-largest banana exporter, with Colombia overtaking the Southeast Asian nation.

FAO's preliminary report showed that Colombia shipped 2.31 million metric tons (MMT) of bananas last year, which was 29,000 metric tons (MT) more than the 2.28 MMT exported by the Philippines.

The international agency said Panama Disease continued to drag down Philippine output, with banana growers bearing the brunt of "substantial costs" to prevent the disease.

Philippine banana exports last year fell by 3.1 percent to 2.28 MMT, lower than the 2.35 MMT it shipped in 2023.

Meanwhile, the Philippines had forged a trade deal with South Korea which aims to boost the country's banana exports and reclaim its market share in the Korean market.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said that under the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Korea, the 30-percent tariff levied on banana imports had been slashed by 12 percentage points starting January 1.

It added that the tariff rate will be cut by 6 percentage points annually until it gets zero-rated in the fifth year of effectivity.

"From 2012, we used to have a 98.2-percent market share in the Korean market," DTI Export Marketing Bureau (DTI-EMB) Director Bianca Pearl Sykimte said.

"But since it became zero for some of our competitors like Vietnam, Costa Rica, and Peru, they were able to gain significant market shares in the Korean market."

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/03/fungal-diseases-cripple-small-banana-farms/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Purchase of imported goats, sheep secures DA nod

Ada Pelonia

February 3, 2025

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has approved the importation of additional goats and sheep in its bid to bolster the country's livestock industry.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the importation of 1,520 breeder goats and 4,310 sheep would restock and upgrade local herds, primarily in Mindanao.

“The imported animals, which will help improve the genetic quality of local livestock, are part of efforts to strengthen the country's goat and sheep farming sectors.”

The goats, which comprise 155 Anglo Nubian bucks, 175 Boer bucks, and 1,190 Boer does, will be distributed to nucleus and multiplier farms in Barili, Cebu, and Makilala, North Cotabato.

Meanwhile, the sheep, including 260 Dorper rams and 4,050 Dorper ewes, will be allocated for distribution in North Cotabato.

The agency said the goats and sheep should meet the required standards. For one, both small ruminants must be between 6 and 15 months old.

It added that goats must weigh at least 35 kilos for bucks and 30 kilos for does after quarantine, while sheep must weigh at least 40 kilos for rams and 35 kilos for ewes. The imported sheep must be full-blooded and come from registered farms.

The DA said Anglo-Nubian goats are highly valued for their meat, milk, and hide production, though they are not heavy milk producers. Boer goats, primarily raised for meat, are among the most sought-after livestock breeds.

It also said that breeder goats from the US can sell for anywhere between \$800 to \$5,000 depending on quality. Dorper sheep, known for their rapid growth and meat production, typically sell for around \$500 to \$1,500 each.

The DA noted that it has yet to schedule the bidding for the animal importation, but funding for the goat and sheep purchases has already been secured under the 2024 budget.

It added that the imported small ruminants must be delivered within 90 days from the issuance of the notice of award by the agency's National Livestock Program (NLP).

“This importation is part of ongoing efforts to boost the Philippines's livestock industry, ensuring better quality herds and more sustainable meat production in the future,” the DA said.

“Raising small ruminants such as goats and sheep could supplement farmers' income, generate employment, and support food security efforts.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/03/purchase-of-imported-goats-sheep-secures-da-nod/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Govt needs 1M kilos of natural fibers for uniforms–PTRI

Bless Aubrey Ogerio

February 3, 2025

The government will need around 1 million kilograms of banana and pineapple fibers annually for the uniforms of state workers, according to the Philippine Textile Research Institute (PTRI).

PTRI supervising researcher Jenneli Caya told the BusinessMirror that while the attached agency of the Department of Science and Technology does not purchase large amounts of fibers, it plays an important role in identifying the required quantities for the needs of the government.

“To supply uniforms for 1.9 million government employees, we need around 482,000 kilograms of pineapple fiber and 640,000 kilograms of banana fiber,” Caya said. “These requirements are substantial, especially when considering that the fibers must come from local sources.”

Textile institution director Julius Leñaño also elaborated on the fibers being prioritized for production. “We base it on the fabric requirements we need to produce,” Leñaño told the BusinessMirror. “Technically, we are working heavily on bamboo and pineapple fibers, and less on banana and abaca.”

Caya said some 320 hectares of pineapple plantations and 100 hectares of banana plantations would meet the growing demand for natural fibers for government uniforms.

“This is the requirement for one set of uniforms, which is needed for just one day’s use. Multiply that by the four days a week that government employees are working, and you can see how substantial the demand is for fibers like pineapple, banana, and abaca.”

Under the Philippine Tropical Fabrics Law, the government is mandated to use locally produced fabrics for official uniforms and other applications in government offices and functions.

Last year, the Philippine Army entered into a memorandum of understanding with PTRI to collaborate on developing locally produced fabric for military uniforms.

Despite challenges like climate change and natural disasters, Leñaño noted that the local textile industry is gaining traction as consumers and manufacturers increasingly prioritize eco-friendly options.

“The demand is there, and it’s growing,” Leñaño said. “Local manufacturers, especially those producing government uniforms, are looking for sustainable, locally made fabrics.”

“It’s not just about looking good. It’s about supporting our farmers, our culture, and the environment. People want to wear something that benefits the country.”

Latest Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data revealed that the Philippine economy grew by just 5.2 percent in Q4 2024, due largely to extreme weather which caused disruptions in the agriculture sector and other industries. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/01/30/q4-gdp-growth-at-5-2-as-typhoon-battered-farm-sector-shrinks/>)

PSA also reported a 3.1 percent decline in crop production, valued at P281.55 billion in constant 2018 prices. Pineapple, banana, and abaca saw decreases of 1.1 percent, 5.8 percent and 0.2 percent, respectively.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/03/govt-needs-1m-kilos-of-natural-fibers-for-uniforms-ptri/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Groups back SRA import fees for alternative sweeteners

Ada Pelonia

February 3, 2025

Sugar millers and refiners have thrown their support behind the Sugar Regulatory Administration's (SRA) decision to impose import clearance fees for alternative sweeteners.

In a joint statement, the Philippine Sugar Millers' Association Inc. (PSMA) and the Philippine Association of Sugar Refineries Inc. (PASRI) said Sugar Order (SO) 6, which authorized the import clearance fees, should not cause spikes in confectionery and beverage prices.

Under SO 6, imported goods under Harmonized System (HS) codes 1701, 1702, and 1704 will be slapped a clearance fee of P60 per metric ton (MT).

Some of these items include sucrose, lactose, maltose, glucose, maple syrup, honey, caramel, and sugar confectionery items, such as chewing gum and white chocolate not containing cocoa.

"Except for fructose, the fee is only P60 per MT, equivalent to P0.06 per kilogram. This should not have a significant effect on consumer prices," the two groups said.

According to PSMA President Terence Uygongco, SO 6 would serve as "a crucial tool" to accurately assess the supply and demand for sugar in the country.

"Sugar producers are puzzled by the weakening demand for sugar. Given the country's growing population and a strengthening economy, we would expect an increase in sugar consumption."

However, he noted that demand has "remarkably" declined, which was even lower compared with the levels seen during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

"The SRA has pointed out that SO6 was issued to monitor the entry of alternative sweeteners and sweetened products, which impact the sugar market that in turn affect our local farmers."

For his part, PASRI President Renato Cabati said the import clearance fees are not the same as import permits.

"Reading through the order, it is clear that it does not impose restrictions on the importation of alternative sweeteners. It only requires an SRA clearance for release, which is not the same as an import permit," Cabati said

"Anyone can still import sweeteners, provided they comply with the clearance process. The fees and requirements outlined in the order are standard procedures for sugar importation. SRA may simply be seeking to establish uniform regulations for both sugar and other sweeteners."

The groups also noted that SO 6 underwent "a thorough legal and regulatory review before its issuance."

"There should be no doubt that SRA acted within its mandate," they said.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona confirmed that the implementation of SO 6 has been suspended pending further consultations with industry representatives. It was supposed to be implemented last February 1.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/03/groups-back-sra-import-fees-for-alternative-sweeteners/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Insured farmers to get payments thru GCash

Ada Pelonia

February 3, 2025

THE Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC) inked an agreement with GCash operator G-Xchange Inc. to streamline indemnity payments to insured farmers.

Through a memorandum of agreement (MOA), the PCIC and G-Xchange would collaborate to deliver a payout system, which would “financially empower” farmers and “advance financial inclusion” in rural areas.

“Your commitment to this partnership demonstrates our shared goal of empowering the agricultural sector through innovation. Together, we are paving the way for a more resilient and financially inclusive future for our farmers and fisherfolk,” PCIC President Jovy C. Bernabe was quoted in a statement as saying.

The PCIC didn’t disclose how much it is paying G-Xchange.

According to the statement, the contract includes the introduction of the “funds disbursement service” in the GCash platform, which would allow indemnity payments to be deposited directly into farmers’ GCash wallet accounts in real-time, “eliminating delays and inefficiencies associated with issuing physical checks.”

“This innovation not only aligns with the government’s goal of financial inclusivity but also supports PCIC’s push for digitalization and process efficiency,” Bernabe said.

The agency noted that a key advantage of this partnership is introducing farmers to the digital ecosystem of GCash, “enabling them to save, invest, and access microfinancing tools for resilience and financial growth.”

“This collaboration goes beyond efficiency—it is a step toward empowering our farmers,” Bernabe said.

In line with the government’s financial inclusion agenda, this initiative provides farmers with easy access to financial tools and services, even in remote areas, the PCIC asserts.

“It envisions uplifting agricultural communities and ensuring resilience, inclusivity, and innovation for farmers nationwide.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/03/insured-farmers-to-get-payments-thru-gcash/>

ABANTE TONITE:

DA kinastigo sa diskarte: `Food security emergency huli na, habulin ang mga trader!`

February 2, 2025

Hinamon ng isang pambansang pederasyon ng mga magsasaka ang batayan ng Department of Agriculture (DA) sa plano nitong magdeklara ng food security emergency sa bigas bukas, Pebrero 4.

Paliwanag ng Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), maaari lamang magrekomenda ng food security emergency ang National Price Coordinating Council (NPRC) kung may kakakaibang pagsirit sa presyo ng bigas sa ilalim ng Rice Tariffication Law.

Sa pag-aaral umano ng FFF sa datos ng Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), noong Setyembre 2023 pa nag-umpisang tumaas ang presyo ng well-milled at regular milled rice sa bansa at ang pinakamataas nito ay naitala noong Marso 2024.

Mula noon, bumababa na umano ang presyo ng bigas.

“How can you declare an emergency now when prices are already dropping and the extraordinary increase in prices actually occurred a year ago,” tanong ni FFF National Manager Raul Montemayor.

Sa pagdedeklara ng food security emergency sa bigas, maibebenta ng National Food Authority (NFA) ang mga nakaimbak na bigas nito na nasa 300,000 tonelada o anim na milyong sako sa tulong ng local government units at ng mga Kadiwa outlet na mas mababa sa presyo sa merkado. Sabi ni Montemayor, kung ang problema ay mahal ang presyo ng bigas, bakit hindi habulin ng DA at iba pang mga ahensiya ng pamahalaan ang mga wholesaler at trader na tumitiba ng malaki taas-presyo ng bigas kahit binaba na ang taripa ng imported rice sa 15% mula 35% noon pang Hulyo 2024.

Sa tantiya ng FFF, makukuha ng NFA, sa pamamagitan ng mga lokal na pamahalaan at Kadiwa outlets, ang 25% ng merkado ng bigas sa Metro Manila sa plano nitong mag-unload ng 30,000 tonelada kada buwan.

Kung ang magiging bentahan ng NFA rice ay P38 per kilo, ang magiging presyuhan ng mga trader kapag bumibili ng bigas na tuyo sa magsasaka ay P19 per kilo, ayon sa kuwenta ng FFF.

Sa farmgate na P19 per kilo ng palay, wala na umanong matitira sa mga magsasaka pagkatapos ibawas ang mga utang na kailangang bayaran at iba pang mga gastusin.

Kung ang dahilan naman ay para lumuwag ang NFA warehouse upang may paglalagyan ang mga bibilhin sa mga magsasaka ngayong anihan, P9 bilyon lamang ito at 4% lamang ng mga ani ang kakayaning bilhin ng badyet ng NFA, sabi ng FFF.

Panawagan ng FFF sa Kongreso, ayusin ang kakulangan ng Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Law at ang Rice Tariffication Law. (Eileen Mencias)

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