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MANILA BULLETIN:

DA's 4,000 MT onion importation exposes gov't neglect of Pinoy farmers—groups

BY JEL SANTOS

Feb 9, 2025 03:56 PM



MARK BALMORES/MB FILE PHOTO

Farmers and progressive groups said that the Department of Agriculture's (DA) decision to import 4,000 metric tons (MT) of onions on the eve of the local harvest season highlights the administration's lack of concern for Filipino farmers.

In a statement, farmers' group Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) said that instead of stabilizing prices, the agency's decision will further undermine the domestic agricultural sector.

"Farmers should not be made to suffer again due to the government's failed policies and misplaced priorities," Danilo Ramos, the chairperson of KMP, said.

According to Ramos, the DA's move once again favors traders and importers rather than supporting local farmers.

He cautioned that the influx of imported onions during harvest season would depress farm gate prices and deepen farmers' financial struggles.

"Once again, the DA has shown where its loyalties lie—not with our struggling farmers but with big traders and importers who benefit from these policies. Importing onions at this time will push down farm gate prices, leaving our farmers in deeper debt and losses," he stated.

"The government's onion importation right in the middle of harvest season is a deliberate act of economic sabotage that will only drive down farmers' incomes while benefiting a few importers."

The Amihan National Federation of Peasant Women has also criticized the move of the agriculture department, saying importing onions amid harvest season will further burden onion farmers in the country.

Amihan Secretary General Cathy Estavillo Said such measure would force down farm gate prices and trigger significant losses for local farmers, while benefiting large traders who would then hike retail prices for substantial profit.

She stressed that such importation policies repeatedly inflict undue suffering on farmers because the government appears to favor foreign interests, big traders, importers, and hoarders.

Data from the Bureau of Plant Industry showed that as of mid-January, red onion stocks stood at 8,500 metric tons and white onion stocks at 1,628 metric tons.

Last year, domestic production reached a record 264,323 metric tons—the highest since 2019—with an estimated 33,000 metric tons expected from the upcoming harvest.

Ramos said that such robust local supply renders the importation unnecessary.

Group demands accountability

The KMP demanded accountability from the DA over its P3-billion cold storage program and the Optimization and Resiliency In the Onion Industry Network (ORION) Project.

“We have seen this before—onion prices plummeting and farmers forced to dump their harvest due to oversupply. Now, the government must answer: What happened to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s promise to build more cold storage facilities for farmers?” said Ramos.

Ramos noted that in 2024 President Marcos acknowledged that oversupply drives prices down and proposed cold storage as a solution—citing solar power as a means to reduce operational costs.

As such, he said that DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel later announced plans to establish two solar-powered cold storage facilities in Occidental Mindoro by 2025.

However, Ramos pointed out that farmers nationwide are still struggling to access proper storage while massive onion wastage continues, and he questioned where these promised facilities were.

The KMP president said that the current policies of the agriculture department are in dire need of a complete revision.

“We must protest DA’s skewed policy of prioritizing importers over local farmers. Stop the unbridled importation, take the PH agriculture out of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture and genuinely strengthen local agri production. The continued suffering of onion farmers is a clear indication that DA policies need an urgent overhaul,” he said

On Feb. 6, DA Laurel announced that he had greenlit the importation of 3,000 metric tons of red onions and 1,000 metric tons of white onions, with shipments slated to arrive within two weeks.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/9/da-s-4-000-mt-onion-importation-exposes-gov-t-neglect-of-pinoy-farmers-groups>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Marcos Jr., Cambodia PM seek to elevate bilateral ties

[Helen Flores](#) - The Philippine Star

February 9, 2025 | 12:00am



Cambodian Prime Minister Hun will make his first official visit to the Philippines on Feb. 10 and 11, according to a statement released by the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) on Friday night.

Presidential Communications Office

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos is set to meet Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet on Tuesday to discuss strategies for enhancing ties between the two Southeast Asian nations.

Hun will make his first official visit to the Philippines on Feb. 10 and 11, according to a statement released by the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) on Friday night.

The Cambodian leader will hold a bilateral meeting with Marcos at Malacañang to tackle “advancing cooperation in combating transnational crimes, defense, trade, tourism, regional and multilateral cooperation,” the PCO said.

The two leaders previously met on the sidelines of the 50th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Special Summit in Melbourne, Australia in March last year.

During their meeting, the President expressed Manila’s interest in engaging with Phnom Penh in the agriculture sector, particularly in rice trade.

Cambodia’s Deputy Prime Minister Sok Chenda Sophea also met Marcos at Malacañang in August last year.

To boost economic collaboration, Finance Secretary Ralph Recto announced in November 2023 that the Philippines and Cambodia would sign a double taxation agreement in February 2025.

Under the terms of the agreement, the two countries agreed to mitigate the burden of double taxation on individuals and businesses operating across borders, which may contribute to trade and investment barriers and encourage cross-border economic activities.

Currently, more than 7,000 Filipinos live and work in Cambodia, most of whom belong to the skilled labor sector, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

In November 2022, Marcos visited Cambodia to participate in the 40th and 41st ASEAN summits.

The Philippines and Cambodia formally established diplomatic relations on Aug. 20, 1957.

However, on March 18, 1975, the Philippine government closed its embassy in Phnom Penh as the fall of the Lon Nol government to the Khmer Rouge became imminent.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/09/2420281/marcos-jr-cambodia-pm-seek-elevate-bilateral-ties>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Philippines, UAE eye more areas for economic cooperation

Helen Flores - The Philippine Star

February 9, 2025 | 12:00am



Photo shows the high-rise buildings of Bonifacio Global City in Taguig as the sun sets. The Philippine economy is expected to grow by six percent this year as public investment spending continues to drive economic activity.

Noel Pabalete

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos is eyeing to expand cooperation with the United Arab Emirates in “so many areas” to strengthen economic relations between the two countries.

The President met with UAE Minister of Investment Mohamed Hassan Alsuwaidi at Malacañang on Friday to discuss enhancing trade and investment opportunities for both sides.

“I’m happy to see you and discover so many areas that would be possible for us to explore further,” Marcos told the UAE official.

In response, Alsuwaidi said: “After having discussions today, we really don’t understand why we haven’t historically invested more and, given the amount of opportunities we see, whether it’s in the infrastructure, whether it’s in industrial mining or telecommunication, data centers, renewables – the size of opportunities, health care, are tremendous.”

In a post on his social media pages late Friday, Marcos said the UAE official’s visit would open more investment opportunities in the country, including in infrastructure, renewable energy, artificial intelligence, health care and education.

“This collaboration is the result of the UAE’s recognition of the potential of the Philippines as a center of business and trade in the region,” Marcos said.

Alsuwaidi also informed the President that the UAE recognized Filipino nurses for providing excellent patient care in his country.

He also described the relationship between the Philippines and the UAE as “very deep.”

In 2023, the UAE was the Philippines’ 18th largest trading partner out of 230.

Approved investments from the UAE totaled P376.71 million in 2023 and P82.59 million from January to September 2024.

Priority sectors for investment promotion to the UAE include agribusiness/agriculture, energy efficiency technologies and renewable energy, infrastructure or public-private partnership projects, innovation (artificial intelligence), information technology and business process management.

On Nov. 30, 2023, the Department of Trade and Industry and the UAE Ministry of Investment signed a memorandum of understanding to develop high-capacity data center projects in the Philippines.

UAE companies such as Edgnex Data Centres have signified plans to invest in data centers in the country.

On Jan. 15, the Department of Energy, the Board of Investments and Masdar signed an Implementation Agreement to develop solar, wind and battery energy storage systems in the Philippines. The project aims to achieve a total capacity of up to one gigawatt by 2030, with a total investment of \$15 billion.

In November last year, Marcos met with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Dubai.

During their meeting, the two leaders acknowledged expanding their relations into new cooperation areas beyond traditional sectors.

Marcos also expressed his gratitude for the care and respect shown to the Filipino community there.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/02/09/2420278/philippines-uae-eye-more-areas-economic-cooperation>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Soaring egg prices have US consumers squawking

Agence France-Presse / 10:05 AM February 09, 2025



Eggs are seen for sale in a Giant grocery store in McLean, Virginia on January 28, 2025. Agence France-
Presse

WASHINGTON — A resurgence of avian flu, which first struck the United States in 2022, is hitting chicken farms hard, sending egg prices soaring and rattling consumers accustomed to buying this dietary staple for only a few dollars.

In Washington and its suburbs, supermarket egg shelves are now often empty, or sparsely stocked. Some stores limit the number of cartons each client may buy. And everywhere, consumers are shocked by the high prices.

“They’re getting expensive,” 26-year-old student Samantha Lopez told AFP as she shopped in a supermarket in the US capital. “It’s kind of difficult... My budget for food is already very tight.”

The situation is much the same in the southern state of Florida.

“Eggs are important (and) so nutritious,” said Miami resident Blanche De Jesus, “but you can hardly buy them because they are so expensive. It is a shame.”

Responding to irate consumers, a Washington supermarket posted this explanation: “You may notice a price increase on eggs at this time due to the recent avian influenza outbreak in the Midwest,” the country’s agricultural heartland.

More than 21 million egg-laying hens have been euthanized this year because of the disease, according to data published Friday by the US Agriculture Department. Most of them were in the states of Ohio, North Carolina and Missouri.

The department reported the “depopulation” of a further 13.2 million in December.

Higher prices were the inevitable result, experts say.

“If there’s no birds to lay eggs... then we have a supply shortage, and that leads to higher prices because of supply and demand dynamics,” said Jada Thompson, a poultry specialist at the University of Arkansas.

‘Near-record highs’

Some grocers are “holding prices at record or near-record highs to dampen demand,” the Agriculture Department said.

The average price of a dozen Grade A eggs was 65 percent higher in December compared to a year before — rising from \$2.50 to \$4.15, according to official data.

Supermarkets are not the only ones feeling the pain.

Waffle House, a popular restaurant chain known for its all-day breakfast menu, made headlines when it moved to charge customers an extra 50 cents per egg.

“The continuing egg shortage caused by HPAI (bird flu) has caused a dramatic increase in egg prices,” Waffle House said in a statement to CNN. “Customers and restaurants are being forced to make difficult decisions.”

In the United States, the virus is being found not only in poultry but also in dairy cows.

Sixty-seven cases have been detected in humans since the beginning of last year, nearly all of them proving benign and linked to known contacts with infected animals.

Americans are among the world’s biggest egg lovers, particularly at breakfast time, consuming on average 277 eggs a year, according to the United Egg Producers, an agricultural cooperative.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/263750/soaring-egg-prices-have-us-consumers-squawking>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

How technology can benefit farmers

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:10 AM February 09, 2025

Farm under Snorfa Bukidnon

In 2011, former corporate employee Wilmar Ompoc of Bukidnon decided to make farming his source of livelihood, developing a piece of land from his in-laws.

Without prior exposure to agriculture, Ompoc initially faced numerous challenges. However, through training sessions, he is now the producer of various commodities including corn, vegetables, rice, coconut and livestock.

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

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

A key component of the DFP, FarmTech empowers farmer associations to educate more farmers on digital applications for agriculture. It is an all-in-one training kit designed to enhance digital literacy among farmer groups and cooperatives in remote areas. The kit includes a tablet, 10 smartphones, a SmartBro pocket WiFi with Smart Prepaid load cards, an outdoor projector and screen, a rechargeable portable sound system, a flash drive with multimedia resources and apps, and DA-ATI-developed learning materials.



FarmTech for Snorfa Bukidnon —Contributed photos

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

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

Based on a government briefer, DFP adopts a ladderized approach in helping farmers make better farming decisions, access more market opportunities, and increase their livelihood and income. The program offers beginner (DFP 101), intermediate (DFP 102) and advanced (DFP 103) modules.

DFP 101 aims to encourage farmers to utilize smartphones, the internet, basic agriculture applications and social media marketing in boosting their farming productivity. It familiarizes farmers with the digital tools and technologies to help them in their daily lives and farming practices.

DFP 102 is focused on advanced social media applications and smartphone operation, introduction of agri-related applications, e-commerce apps, mobile money platforms and easy-to-use online editing tools to help farmers create engaging social media content for their online business pages.

DFP 103 engages participants in advanced agripreneurship and financial literacy through smart farming.

These efforts are seen to highlight the PLDT group’s support for the overall digitalization thrust of the government. This also seen in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal No. 1 (No Poverty) and Goal No. 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

<https://business.inquirer.net/505662/how-technology-can-benefit-farmers>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Davao's Cacao Culture to broaden sourcing via farm-management deals

February 9, 2025 | 7:58 pm



CACAO CULTURE.PH

By **Adrian H. Halili**, Reporter

DAVAO-BASED chocolate brand Cacao Culture said it is taking a “farm adoption” approach to supporting farmers in the region and growing its bean-sourcing network.

“We’re not trying to be the biggest. We want to be (possibly be) the most collaborative,” Kenneth Reyes-Lao, founder and owner of Cacao Culture, told *BusinessWorld*.

Mr. Reyes-Lao and his family currently own a three-hectare cacao farm in Calinan, Davao City. It also supplements its cacao supply from small-holder farmers and cooperatives in Davao City.

He said that one of Cacao Culture’s long-term plans is to further expand its sourcing from the area.

“We need to grow the supply side which is the farms. So, through the Adopt-a-Farm program, we’re hoping to, under our care, manage around 20,000 to 50,000 trees,” he added.

“On other farms, there are trees that are unproductive or neglected. So, we move in to manage the farm, and then also be the ones to take up the beans. We’ll be buying from the farms that we adopt,” he said.

The company started in 2016 selling cacao seedlings, while the farm was established in 2017.

Mr. Reyes-Lao said that the business has since evolved from agriculture to selling chocolate products both made in-house or by other brands. It sells its products at its physical store in Davao and via e-commerce platforms.

“When we started in 2017, it was just the three hectares we planted, and then lately we realized that we were growing and the company needed supply,” he said. “Then we saw an opportunity to adopt a certain farm where we could apply our practices.”

“So far, this has worked (and) right now we have two farms under the program,” he added.

Among Cacao Culture Farms’ practices is the use of biochar in the growing process. This method enhances soil health and improves plant growth and crop nutrition.

He said that the husks of discarded cacao pods are burned and reused as biocharcoal.

“We were able to work with WasteX, a Singapore-based startup, that... provides equipment that can convert agricultural waste into biocharcoal,” Mr. Reyes-Lao added.

He said that the farm employs a 50-50 ratio of biocharcoal and traditional fertilizer.

Mr. Reyes-Lao added that its other sustainability practice is avoiding the use of plastic sleeves to cover cacao pods.

Cacao pods are typically covered in plastic sleeves to protect them from pests like cocoa pod borers, which lay eggs in the pods.

Additionally, he said that the company is looking to expand its physical store network over the next three to five years, mainly focusing on the Davao area.

“The land area of Davao is large, so we maybe need to create three to five shops just to service Davao City. Then maybe airports in Cagayan de Oro or Cebu,” he added.

Mr. Reyes-Lao said that expansion to Luzon will likely be pursued through e-commerce platforms or a commissary to service Metro Manila.

“We could set up a commissary or warehouses, because e-commerce wise, I think we can expand in Manila,” he added.

The Davao Region is the Philippines’ top producer of cacao, accounting for about 80% of the total production.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/02/09/652122/davaos-cacao-culture-to-broaden-sourcing-via-farm-management-deals/>

REMATE:

Pagbili ng 350K tonelada ng Vietnamese rice ipinagpaliban muna ng PH importers

February 9, 2025 14:05



MANILA, Philippines – Ipinagpaliban muna ng mga rice importer mula sa Pilipinas ang pagbili ng nasa 350,000 metriko tonelada ng Vietnamese rice, ayon sa ulat ng Reuters.

Sa naturang report, sinabi na ang mga trader ay kasalukuyang nagsasagawa ng negosasyon matapos na ang presyo ng Vietnamese rice ay nakakita ng “steep decline” noong mga nakaraang linggo.

Sinabi ng isang Singapore-based senior executive sa isang international grain trading company na, “buyers are not willing to take the expensive rice.”

Ani Department of Agriculture spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, ang import delays ay posibleng dulot ng nagdaang holiday sa Vietnam. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/pagbili-ng-350k-tonelada-ng-vietnamese-rice-ipinagpaliban-muna-ng-ph-importers/>

MANILA STANDARD:

Soaring egg prices have US consumers squawking

By Agence France Presse

February 9, 2025, 10:16 am

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In Washington and its suburbs, supermarket egg shelves are now often empty, or sparsely stocked. Some stores limit the number of cartons each client may buy. And everywhere, consumers are shocked by the high prices.

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https://manilastandard.net/news/314555590/soaring-egg-prices-have-us-consumers-squawking.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawIWMelleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHRbvpKGwdRV59IyKYzL61C0aCCoOfrxjM3sVkhjHdDdmPtzXhALAYmhA7g_aem_dy1jt9c9_-8U3gydZUW74w