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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Start of tollway works a boon for Bicol; Salceda explains why

BY [ELLSON QUISMORIO](#)

Mar 10, 2025 02:57 PM

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## AT A GLANCE

- Citing potential benefits to his region, a Bicol congressman has welcomed the Toll Regulatory Board's (TRB) announcement that the final engineering design for the first segment of the South Luzon Expressway Toll Road 5 (TR5) is now set for approval.



Albay 2nd district Rep. Joey Salceda (Facebook)

Citing potential benefits to his region, a Bicol congressman has welcomed the Toll Regulatory Board's (TRB) announcement that the final engineering design for the first segment of the South Luzon Expressway Toll Road 5 (TR5) is now set for approval.

According to Albay 2nd district Rep. Joey Salceda, the development paves the way for the start of actual works on the expressway.

The TRB recently announced that the final engineering design will cover the first segment, from Lucena to Gumaca Quezon.

"Along with ongoing works for TR4, the Lucena-Gumaca segment will bring much-needed relief to commuters and truckers alike, and will reduce the cost of bringing goods to Bicol significantly," Salceda said.

"The lack of strong land transport links to Calabarzon effectively makes Bicol an island, which makes us vulnerable to stress on food and supply of other essential goods during emergencies. It also makes our supply chains with Manila very expensive to maintain," Salceda added.

"For Albay, the most important linkage would be arterials to the Bicol Ecozone in Libon, which has already been approved by the PEZA (Philippine Economic Zone Authority) Board, and will be for proclamation probably this year," noted the economist-congressman.

"Once you have SLEX (South Luzon Expressway) and the Bicol Ecozone, plus DA's (Department of Agriculture) planned agricultural super port there, food costs will go down for much of Albay, and we will

have as many as 8,000 new manufacturing jobs, So, we will definitely pursue arterials from SLEX to Libon,” he said.

Salceda adds that the advantage of a toll road over the AH-26 is that “there is a continuous supply of funds for maintenance from toll fees”.

“The perennial problems in Andaya Highway require consistent maintenance. The way the government does budgeting makes doing that very difficult. A toll operator is free to use set-aside funds to fix it roads, anytime.”

The Committee on Ways and Means chairman said that he will be suggesting that the Naga-Legazpi segment of the TR5 be pursued in parallel with the Lucena-Gumaca segment.

“The Naga- Legazpi portion has a catchment area of around 2.2 million people, including the two largest cities in South Luzon. I think RSA can pursue and operate that segment in advance, so that we don’t have to wait for completion of the emptier parts between Gumaca and Sipocot,” Salceda said.

“The tollroad segment will make the Bicol International Airport (BIA) much more accessible to Camarines Sur, which is very crucial for both BIA’s viability and for Naga,” he said.

The Bicol ecozone, Salceda adds, will also connect through better arterials with the proposed segment.

“I will be asking [Department of Transportation] Secretary Vince Dizon to explore this option, that we pursue this as soon as possible. It’s good for both cities, and I think it will move the needle positively for SLEX revenues as well,” he further said.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/10/start-of-tollway-works-a-boon-for-bicol-salceda-explains-why-1>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Marcos admin spends 99% of 2024 cash allocation, but DBM uses less than 75%

BY [DERCO ROSAL](#)

Mar 10, 2025 01:29 PM



While the Marcos administration used 99 percent of funds allocated last year, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) only used around two-thirds of their funds.

DBM data showed that the national government's notice of cash allocation (NCA) utilization rate was higher than the 2023 rate at 98 percent.

Of the ₱4.9 trillion worth of NCAs issued last year, ₱4.83 trillion were utilized by the Marcos administration, covering the national government agencies (NGAs), local government units (LGUs) and government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs).

Unused allocations stood at ₱72.1 billion, lower than the ₱107.9 billion unused allocations in 2023.

Notably, the DBM and DHSUD had the lowest utilization rates in 2024. The DBM's utilization rate stood at 72 percent, down from a 98-percent rate in 2023. ₱863.6 million were left of the ₱2.2 billion total allocations.

It followed DHSUD, which had the lowest utilization rate at 67 percent from 89 percent in 2023. The agency had not used ₱1.1 billion of the ₱2.3 billion allocations.

“That may likely have to do with low level of obligation or questions about completion of implementation,” former Budget chief Florencio B. Abad said, but added that the DBM's level of obligation must be checked first.

## ADVERTISEMENT

Meanwhile, eight departments fully utilized their cash allocations, including the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the judiciary, Commission on Elections (Comelec), Office of the Ombudsman, and Commission on Human Rights (CHR).

Allocations to LGUs and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) were also utilized 100 percent.

The offices or departments that had relatively lower utilization rates were the Office of the President (OP), Office of the Vice-President (OVP), Department of Agriculture (DA), and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), all of which posted an 86-percent utilization rate.

President Marcos' office left ₱1.5 billion in unused funds in 2024. The OVP had ₱268.5 million, the DA had ₱5.2 billion, and the DTI had ₱1.3 billion.

NCAs are quarterly fund releases from the DBM, allowing government agencies to access Treasury funds for their spending requirements.

Last year, the Philippines' national budget was ₱5.77 trillion. The Marcos administration exceeded its budget by over half a trillion pesos when the total releases hit ₱6.37 trillion.

For 2025, the budget stands at ₱6.32 trillion, more than half of which had already been released, DBM earlier said. Of the released budget, government departments have so far received a total of ₱4.1 trillion.

#### ADVERTISEMENT



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<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/10/marcos-admin-spends-99-of-2024-cash-allocation-but-dbm-uses-less-than-75>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# 'Anong meron?': Barbers wants answers to shoreline lease mystery involving Chinese firms

BY [ELLSON QUISMORIO](#)

Mar 9, 2025 08:12 PM

## AT A GLANCE

- Smelling something fishy, Surigao del Norte 2nd district Rep. Robert Ace Barbers is prodding the Marcos administration to look into the alleged granting of lease to operate to at least 85 Chinese-owned firms by certain local government units (LGUs) in the coastal towns of Bataan, Zambales and Pangasinan for still unknown businesses.



Surigao del Norte 2nd district Rep.

Robert Ace Barbers (PPAB)

Smelling something fishy, Surigao del Norte 2nd district Rep. Robert Ace Barbers is prodding the Marcos administration to look into the alleged granting of lease to operate to at least 85 Chinese-owned firms by certain local government units (LGUs) in the coastal towns of Bataan, Zambales and Pangasinan for still unknown businesses.

Barbers, overall chairman of the House quad-committee, said he had received reliable information from local fishermen in these areas on the suspicious activities of the Chinese-owned firms.

He cited fears that the activities from the foreigners could deprive local fisherfolks of their livelihood.

“According to one of my fishermen-sources, halos lahat ng mangingisda sa mga shorelines na pinaupahan na sa mga Chinese nationals ay nawawalan na ng hanapbuhay dahil itinataboy at di sila pinapadaan sa mga pinaupahan na mga shorelines,” Barbers said.

(Almost all of the fishermen along the shorelines that are being rented by these Chinese nationals are losing their livelihood because they are being driven away from these shorelines.)

“If indeed these more than 80 Chinese firms were allowed to lease, operate and 'exploit' properties in those coastal towns, who or what government agencies, aside from the LGUs, have allowed them to operate and what type of businesses they are engaged in?” he asked.



The veteran solon from Surigao del Norte made the call after the Palace last week ordered an investigation on allegations that arrested Chinese spies Wang Ingyi, Wu Jaren, Cai Shaohuang and Chen Haitao donated 10 Chinese-made motorcycles worth around US\$2,500 or P144,800 each to the Manila police.

Reports said Wang also had been seen in a Shandong ACFROC social media post in July 2022 when he handed over a P500,000 check labeled as a “poverty alleviation bursary” to the mayor of Tarlac City and the local police force.

Barbers said it now seems apparent that the “Chinese spies-invaders” have adopted the same illegal business patterns of the banned Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGO) in the country.

This involves befriending and reportedly corrupting certain law enforcement and local government officials, so they would allow their unhampered nefarious activities in their localities.

Barbers also urged Malacañang to determine the legal basis and protocols used by LGUs along the coastal towns of Zambales, Bataan, and Pangasinan in granting the lease to Chinese firms of what supposed to be are government properties along shorelines and agricultural lands to the Chinese-owned firms in their respective localities.

Barbers said there were also reports about the presence for almost three months now of two Chinese-owned ships in the waters off two barangay coastal villages of Palauig town in Zambales.

He says the ships' activities are as yet undetermined since the local coast guard and other concerned agencies are either just standing by or keeping a “blind eye” to their presence.

“These ships could be engaged in dredging activities, mining, smuggling and possibly drug smuggling. But the concerned law enforcement agencies are doing nothing about them,” said the quad-comm overall chairman.

“Mukhang natutulog sa pancitan o bayad na siguro ang mga lokal na ahente ng Philippine Coast Guard, Bureau of Immigration, the Philippine National Police, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, LGUs, at iba pa sa mga nasabing lugar,” he lamented.

(Looks like the local agents of the Philippine Coast Guard, Bureau of Immigration, the Philippine National Police, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, LGUs and other agencies are either sleeping on the job or on the take.)

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/9/barbers-wants-answers-to-shoreline-lease-mystery-involving-chinese-firms>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# ‘Expedite probe of 2023 NFA rice sale’

**Bella Cariaso** - The Philippine Star

March 11, 2025 | 12:00am



Newly delivered sacks of rice from Regions II and III are being organized inside the National Food Authority (NFA) warehouse in Valenzuela on January 20, 2025.

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — Ombudsman Samuel Martires should expedite the investigation into the alleged anomalous sale of National Food Authority (NFA) rice to private traders in 2023, according to farmers’ group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag).

Martires should also identify officials being probed by the anti-graft court, Sinag president Rosendo So said yesterday.

“We are asking the ombudsman to inform us about the progress of the case against the former NFA administrator and other officials,” he said.

About 75,000 bags of NFA rice worth P93.75 million were allegedly sold by NFA officials to G4 Rice Mill San Miguel Corp. and NBK San Pedro Rice Mill without the approval of the NFA Council.

“If no one is prosecuted before the Sandiganbayan, then those involved in such anomalies will not be deterred,” So said.

The ombudsman imposed in March last year a six-month preventive suspension on then-NFA administrator Roderico Bioco, assistant administrator for operations John Robert Hermano and 137 other officials and employees facing administrative charges.

The suspension of 72 NFA officials was lifted by the ombudsman.

At a recent House hearing, it was revealed that the buffer stock was sold for only P25 per kilo, while the prevailing market price at the time was P70 per kilo.

So urged the ombudsman to inform the public about other cases filed against NFA officials from previous administrations who engaged in similar irregularities.

“There was another case involving a different administrator who purchased palay and subsequently authorized rice imports. We want to know what has happened with these other cases,” So said.

### **P15/kilo farmgate**

Meanwhile, the farmgate price of palay has dropped to P15 per kilo amid efforts to reduce retail rice prices, Sinag executive director Jayson Cainglet said.

Palay's farmgate price, he noted, should be at least P23 per kilo so that farmers earn and recover production costs.

"While the Department of Agriculture (DA) is trying to pull down the retail price of rice, traders are taking advantage," he said yesterday.

Farmers find it difficult to heed the NFA's advice to dry their palay, which would enable them to sell their produce to the NFA at higher prices, Cainglet said.

The DA should only implement a maximum suggested retail price of up to P45 per kilo of rice to prevent the declining farmgate price of palay, he maintained.

The NFA should have a budget of over P30 billion for its procurement to influence the farmgate price of palay, Cainglet said.

"At present, the NFA has P14 billion for its procurement, which is only good for 15 days. That is only three percent of the total annual consumption," he said.

Cainglet expressed support for the position of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. that there is no rice cartel in the country.

### **NFA modernization**

The NFA is investing P10 billion to modernize its rice warehouses and post-harvest facilities to enhance efficiency and fulfill its buffer stocking mandate.

Of the amount, P1.5 billion will be allocated to repair warehouses and P3.5 billion will be spent to expand storage capacity by 800,000 metric tons next year, the NFA said.

At present, the NFA's storage capacity stands at one million MT.

The remaining P5 billion will fund the construction and improvement of rice mills, dryers and silos.

Several plots of land have been donated to the NFA or made available for use through usufruct agreements for the construction of new warehouses in Mindanao and Luzon, NFA administrator Larry Lacson disclosed.

The modernization projects are expected to be operational by the end of next year, in time for the dry season harvest of 2027, the NFA said. — **Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/03/11/2427448/expedite-probe-2023-nfa-rice-sale>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

## **DA: 3,270 MT of imported onions arrive**

**Bella Cariaso** - The Philippine Star

March 11, 2025 | 12:00am



**“At least 2,300 MT of red onions entered the country and 970 MT of white bulbs,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. told The STAR yesterday.**

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — At least 3,270 metric tons (MT) of imported onions have arrived in the country as part of government efforts to lower retail prices.

“At least 2,300 MT of red onions entered the country and 970 MT of white bulbs,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. told The STAR yesterday.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) earlier approved the importation of 4,000 MT of onions – 3,000 MT of red and 1,000 MT of white – following a surge in retail prices, which reached P200 per kilo.

Tiu Laurel emphasized that the limited importation was intended to curb further price increases while awaiting the peak harvest season. As a result, onion prices have dropped from P200 to P130 per kilo, he added.

Agriculture spokesman Arnel de Mesa projected that red onion prices could further decline to P80 to P100 per kilo with the continued arrival of imports and the peak harvest period.

However, farmers’ group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) expressed concern over the depressed farmgate prices, which have dropped to P32 per kilo for white onions and P45 per kilo for red onions.

“The cost of production for white onions is P30 (per kilo). For red bulbs, the farmgate price should be at least P60 (per kilo); P45 (per kilo) is too low,” said Jayson Cainglet, executive director of SINAG.

Cainglet noted that the DA’s target production of 180,000 MT for 2024 is unlikely to be met due to crop damage from armyworms and consecutive typhoons.

He further argued that the DA should have delayed importation until after the harvest season, as the influx of imported onions has driven farmgate prices down.

In 2022, the retail price of onions reached as high as P720 per kilo due to supply shortages and hoarding.

### **Fish import allocation**

The DA has raised the initial import allocation for eligible fish importers, a move industry players say will expedite the utilization of the approved 25,000 MT of imports.

Tiu Laurel recently amended the import rules for the March-to-May period, doubling the initial import allocation per eligible importer from 28 MT to 56 MT.

Subsequent allocations will be capped at 112 MT on a first-come, first-served basis, according to the revised guidelines.

Sources indicated that the DA increased the initial allocation per importer to accelerate the utilization of the approved 25,000 MT of frozen fish imports before May. The 56 MT allocation per importer equates to just two full-load containers.

“Assuming the qualified importers now are 96, then that is just about 5,376 MT. That is low compared to the 25,000 MT approved,” a source said.

Fisheries and Aquaculture Board chair Chingling Tanco said the higher initial import allocation would facilitate faster distribution and importation of the total approved frozen fish volume.

Last month, the DA authorized the importation of 25,000 MT of frozen seafood, including salmon, squid, scallops and sardines to bolster domestic supply and prevent price surges.

“This will add variety in the market, especially for the food service industry, since fish and marine species covered by this importation are mostly fish and marine products not caught locally,” Tiu Laurel earlier said. He assured the public that the move would not affect local fishermen and would streamline business operations.

Sources told The STAR that the approved imported species are foreign and do not thrive or are caught in Philippine waters, ensuring they do not compete directly with local fishers’ catch.

Tanco said the imported fish would be sold in wet markets and supermarkets, increasing domestic supply and stabilizing prices.

The imports may also be distributed to hotels and restaurants, further expanding market availability. —

**Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/03/11/2427452/da-3270-mt-imported-onions-arrive>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# **SWS: DOST should focus on food security**

**EJ Macababba** - The Philippine Star

March 11, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Six out of 10 Filipinos want the Department of Science and Technology to focus on projects that ensure food security, according to a December 2024 Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey commissioned by the DOST, amid growing challenges in the agricultural sector.

In the SWS survey, which was released on Sunday, respondents were asked what aspects should the DOST's science and technology initiatives focus on the most.

Sixty-three percent answered "ensuring food security," followed by "improving the provision of health and nutrition intervention" (57 percent) and "enhancing science education and opportunity to earn" (50 percent).

Last Feb. 5, the DOST launched eight big-ticket programs under the banner "Elev8 Philippines" to support national development, which include promoting precision farming and digital agriculture.

The launch came just two days after the Department of Agriculture declared a food security emergency in response to the "extraordinary" rise in local rice prices.

In the same survey, 71 percent of respondents agreed that the DOST's programs and services "contribute to a resilient, unified and sustainable Philippines," while six percent disagreed.

"The survey is an affirmation of the department's efforts to be at the forefront of providing solutions and opening opportunities to the Filipino people through science, technology and innovation," Science Secretary Renato Solidum said in a statement on Sunday.

"We are committed to ensuring that the public understands how science and technology benefit our society and contribute to inclusive development," he said.

The SWS poll was conducted between Dec. 12 and 18, 2024 with 2,160 respondents.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/03/11/2427453/sws-dost-should-focus-food-security>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# **NFA readies P10B to expand warehouses, boost stocks**

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)  
[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:09 AM March 11, 2025

MANILA, Philippines – The National Food Authority (NFA) is initiating a P10-billion modernization program aimed at increasing the country’s rice inventory and warehousing capacity in preparation for future emergencies.

The grains agency said the initiative would focus on improving rice storage, building new rice mills and upgrading drying facilities—all of which would be funded by the government’s budget allocations for 2024 and 2025.

According to the NFA, the projects were expected to be operational by the end of next year, in time for the summer harvest of 2027.

“This expanded capacity will help us address the current issue where our warehouse space is almost full,” NFA Administrator Larry Lacson said in a statement on Monday.

The NFA set aside P3.5 billion from last year’s funding to increase storage capacity by 800,000 metric tons (MT), or almost double its current capacity, and another P1.5 billion to repair existing warehouses.

Under this year’s national budget, the food agency was given P5 billion to build rice mills, drying facilities and other infrastructure.

Lacson said a total of 136 NFA warehouses nationwide would undergo repairs to store palay (unmilled rice) for harvest in the upcoming wet season.

“We are having all our palay stocks milled to free up space in our warehouses,” Lacson said in a podcast interview uploaded on Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.’s YouTube account.

One of the warehouses for repair, located at the NFA office in Malolos, Bulacan and capable of storing up to 120,000 50-kilogram bags of rice, will receive rice stocks during the peak of the summer harvest in April.

According to Lacson, several plots of land have been donated to the NFA or made available for use through usufruct agreements for constructing warehouses in Mindanao and Luzon, particularly in Mindoro, as the region’s current storage capacity could not meet demand.

The NFA said the new warehouses, along with updated milling and drying equipment, would maximize storage efficiency. Currently, the NFA’s current storage capacity stands at 1 million MT.

The grains agency also said the construction of rice mills, dryers and silo would help increase rice recovery rates, improve farmers’ profitability and eliminate postharvest inefficiencies.

Silos in major rice-producing areas would be upgraded, including those in Cagayan Valley and Central Luzon, to allow the NFA to store rice for up to two years—longer than the usual six months to one year for bagged rice.

“With the new drying facilities, farmers will be able to sell palay with higher moisture content, removing the burden of drying it themselves,” Lacson said.

“This change is expected to stabilize prices for both producers and consumers by ensuring consistent rice quality,” he said.

Lacson considers such facilities a “game-changer” as this would allow the grains agency to purchase rice with moisture content higher than 14 percent.

“This shift will prevent traders from manipulating moisture levels in palay to drive down prices,” he added.

Moisture content refers to the weight of water contained in paddy or rice, according to the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

The IRRI noted that a higher moisture content results in more losses due to poor grain quality. At the same time, lower moisture content results in more losses from shattering.

The NFA is targeting to purchase 545,000 MT of palay to maintain a nine-day supply and 880,000 MT to meet the new buffer stock requirement of 15 days under the expanded Rice Tariffication Law.

Lacson also pushed for regulatory reforms within the NFA to manage rice buffer stocks more effectively and regularly free up storage space for procuring palay. INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/511747/nfa-readies-p10b-to-expand-warehouses-boost-stocks>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Vote for farmer-friendly leaders

By: [Cielito F. Habito](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 04:30 AM March 11, 2025



The graphic is a vertical rectangle with a blue border. In the top left corner, there is a blue circle containing two white quotation marks. In the top right corner, the text "INQUIRER OPINION" is displayed in white, with "INQUIRER" in a smaller font above "OPINION". The main body of the graphic is white and contains the following text in bold black font: "The problem is that too many mayors don't see agriculture as a priority even in agricultural areas ... That's why we need to vote for governors and mayors who value the long-term welfare of our farms and farmers. Our agricultural future and food security hinges on them." Below this text, the author's name "Cielito F. Habito" is written in blue, followed by "Columnist" and "NO FREE LUNCH" in black. At the bottom left, there is a blue banner with the text "READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE:" in white, followed by the "PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER" logo and the "INQUIRER PLUS" logo. The "INQUIRER PLUS" logo includes the text "Philippine Daily Inquirer newspaper's e-reader and digital version." In the bottom right corner of the graphic, there is a small portrait of Cielito F. Habito, a man with dark hair wearing a blue patterned shirt.

Even as Republic Act No. 7160 or the Local Government Code (LGC) devolved agriculture services to local government units (LGUs) in 1991, the mandated devolution hardly happened. To this date, governance and management of the country's agriculture and fisheries sector remains largely top-down. The glaring evidence of this is our agriculture bureaucracy, which has evolved into a top-heavy organization with 13 undersecretaries (usecs) and 14 assistant secretaries (asecs). The norm was only three of each in the 1990s under then Presidents Cory Aquino and Fidel Ramos; in fact, government departments' regular budgets provide for only three usecs and three asecs to this date. Those beyond the prescribed three are funded from special budgets and coterminous with the secretary who designated them.

Why hasn't the devolution of agriculture happened the way it should have? It was, after all, well-grounded on the sound governance principle of subsidiarity, which holds that the governance unit closest to the problems could best solve them. The fundamental flaw, I believe, was in how the Department of Agriculture (DA)

neglected to assume responsibility for building LGU capacities to take over its “rowing” functions. The idea was for DA to work more effectively through the LGUs, while it focuses on “steering.” Instead, it chose to continue “rowing,” persisted with top-down management with centralized programs, and continued to service farmers directly rather than empower LGUs to do it.

But capacitating LGUs was not enough. While the LGC channeled more funds to the LGUs from national tax revenues through their internal revenue allotments or IRA, these were far less than what the LGUs needed to effectively fulfill their devolved functions. The IRA mostly took care of the salaries of the staff passed on by the DA, Department of Health, and Department of Social Welfare and Development, but there was little to fund the work they had to do and the materials needed to do it. While the law required 20 percent of the IRA to be spent on development, there were competing needs for those limited funds and agriculture seemed rarely top-of-mind. Even when the Supreme Court’s 2018 Mandanas-Garcia ruling further expanded the LGUs’ revenue shares in what is now called their national tax allocation or NTA, it was wishful thinking to expect that LGUs would now spend much more on their farmers.

The problem is that too many mayors don’t see agriculture as a priority even in agricultural areas. Thus, the municipal agriculturist gets little operating budget, if at all. A DA-commissioned study team that I led encountered a municipal agriculture officer (MAO) with only one liter of gasoline allowance for his motorcycle per week. We’ve seen MAOs serving as the mayor’s driver, or more commonly, as stall fee collectors in the local public markets. It’s a common observation that local chief executives prefer to spend their budgets on visible structures like municipal buildings, sports complexes, waiting sheds, bus terminals, markets, and lampposts—and I won’t begin to talk of ulterior reasons why.

To its credit, the DA began to see the light in 2018 when Secretary Manny Piñol heeded the advice of Los Baños-based agriculture veterans to pilot a province-led agricultural and fisheries extension system (Pafes). It proved so successful in Ilocos Sur that Secretary William Dar later rolled out Pafes to more, then all provinces. It makes sense that provincial governments, which the law requires to all have an agriculture office, should coordinate agricultural services across its component municipalities and cities—rather than let the MAOs fend for themselves, as was the case after 1991. With Pafes, provinces formulate a Collaborative Provincial Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Program (CPAFEP), which as the name suggests, harnesses collaboration and partnership across various agencies and stakeholders. As conceived, Pafes would have the DA download operating funds to provinces via matching lump sum grants to leverage and augment the latter’s limited resources. The combined funds would support the costs to implement the province’s homegrown CPAFEP and Provincial Commodity Investment Plan that embodies its defined agriculture priorities. This mechanism would avoid the ongoing distortion of having national commodity “banner” programs thwart

provincial priorities, when fund releases tied to commodities may not necessarily be what a province needs or deems to be of prior importance.

Our study team visited provinces all around the country and witnessed Pafes work very well where the governor and his/her mayors take to heart the importance of investing in their farmers. We've also seen pitfalls where these local executives don't. That's why we need to vote for governors and mayors who value the long-term welfare of our farms and farmers. Our agricultural future and food security hinges on them.

cielito.habito@gmail.com

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/181516/vote-for-farmer-friendly-leaders>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Group urges Ombudsman to expedite graft cases vs DA, NFA execs

By: [Luisa Cabato](#) - Reporter / [@luisacabatoINQ](#)  
INQUIRER.net / 12:22 PM March 10, 2025



File photo of the Office of the Ombudsman. Philippine Daily Inquirer / NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

MANILA, Philippines — The Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) has urged the Office of the Ombudsman to expedite the filing of cases against former and current officials of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Food Authority (NFA) involved in irregularities in the rice industry.

In a press release on Sunday, President Rosendo So called on Ombudsman Samuel Martires to speed up the investigation process and reveal the identities of those involved.

“We strongly urge Ombudsman Martires to unveil the identities of the Department of Agriculture officials, including those at the graft-ridden NFA, both past and present, who have been involved in graft and corruption at the agency, in the interest of public transparency,” So said.

“We are asking the Ombudsman to inform us about the progress of the case against the former NFA administrator and other officials,” he also said.

In February 2024, NFA Assistant Administrator for Operations Lemuel Pagayunan submitted a complaint letter to the Office of the President alleging that former NFA administrator Roderico Bioco and other officials sold 75,000 bags of rice to the private sector, which may have defrauded the government of millions in revenue.

A preventive suspension had been ordered by the Ombudsman the following month against 139 NFA officials, including Bioco, amid an ongoing investigation into the alleged disadvantageous sale of rice buffer stocks. The order against more than 100 NFA officials and employees has already been lifted, but the anti-graft body said they are still included as respondents in the case.

Furthermore, So is seeking updates from the Ombudsman on other cases filed against former NFA officials who have engaged in similar irregularities with the anti-graft body.

“There was also another case involving a different administrator who purchased palay and subsequently authorized rice imports. We want to know what has happened with these other cases,” So said.

“The Ombudsman must resolve these cases without delay. If no one is prosecuted before the Sandiganbayan, then those involved in such anomalies will not be deterred,” he lamented.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2042443/group-urges-ombudsman-to-expedite-graft-cases-vs-da-nfa-execs>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Japan auctions emergency rice reserves as prices soar

Agence France-Presse / 01:26 PM March 10, 2025



(FILES) This file photo taken on November 22, 2024 shows bags of rice stacked in a supermarket in central Tokyo. The Japanese government said on February 14, 2025 it will release its stockpile of rice — the nation’s cherished staple food — reserved for emergency use in response to soaring prices. (Photo by Richard A. Brooks / AFP)

Tokyo, Japan — The Japanese government began a rare auction on Monday of its emergency rice stockpiles in a bid to help drive down the surging price of the national staple.

Rice shortages driven by factors from poor harvests caused by hot weather to panic-buying over a “megaquake” warning last summer have caused prices to nearly double over a year.

Exacerbating the problem, some businesses are also thought to be keeping their inventories and waiting for the most opportune time to sell.

Japan stores about a million tons of rice for emergencies.

The country has previously tapped into these reserves during disasters, but this is the first time since the stockpile was built in 1995 that supply chain problems are behind the move.

The agriculture ministry is expected to select successful bidders for 150,000 tons of rice by Wednesday — with the auctioned grain expected to hit store shelves by the end of March.

The ministry says it plans to release another 60,000 tons if necessary.

“This is a highly irregular situation,” agriculture minister Taku Eto told parliament on Monday.

“By sorting out the clogged parts of the distribution network, we hope to relieve the hardship experienced by consumers.”

Experts say several factors have contributed to the crisis.

Among them is a tourism boom and shortages caused by record heatwaves in recent years, as Japan, like other countries, experiences the effects of human-driven climate change.

In August last year, shelves in some stores emptied after the government warned of a possible “megaquake”, along with one of the fiercest typhoons in decades and the annual Obon holiday.

<https://business.inquirer.net/511677/japan-auctions-emergency-rice-reserves-as-prices-soar>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Agri trade deficit narrows 2.8% to \$1 billion in Jan.

March 10, 2025 | 9:08 pm



**PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO**

THE deficit in the trade of agricultural goods in January narrowed 2.8% year on year to \$1 billion, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Agricultural exports in January rose to \$715.25 million from \$538.68 million a year earlier, the PSA said. Agricultural exports accounted for only 29.4% of two-way agricultural trade, which was valued at \$2.43 billion for the month. Exports of farm goods accounted for 11.2% of total exports.

The PSA said agricultural imports rose 9.4% to \$1.72 billion, or 15.0% of all imports in January.

The PSA said the \$2.43 billion total for agriculture trade rose 15.4% year on year, accelerating from 10.6% a year earlier.

The trade deficit narrowed by 10.7% year on year in December but had risen 8.1% in January 2024.

The PSA said exports of animal, vegetable, or microbial fats and oils and their cleavage products, prepared edible fats, and animal or vegetable waxes were valued at \$263.87 million, accounting for 36.9% of all agricultural exports.

Agricultural shipments to members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in January hit \$118.19 million, with Malaysia accounting for \$76.56 million or 65.6% of the total.

The Netherlands accounted for \$67.86 million or 49.9% of the Philippines' agricultural exports to the European Union (EU). It bought agricultural goods worth \$136.13 million from the Philippines.

The PSA said cereals accounted for 19.1% or \$328.02 million of all agricultural imports in January.

It said Vietnam accounted for \$192.16 million or 29.1% of agricultural imports from ASEAN.

The top agricultural products imported from ASEAN were animal, vegetable, microbial fats and oils and their cleavage products, prepared edible fats, animal or vegetable waxes, cereals, and miscellaneous edible preparations.

Among EU members, Spain was the Philippines' top supplier of agricultural commodities, with imports valued at \$32.62 million.

The top agricultural commodities imported from the EU were meat and edible meat offal, dairy produce, eggs, natural honey and edible products of animal origin. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/03/10/658464/agri-trade-deficit-narrows-2-8-to-1-billion-in-jan/>



**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# NFA to upgrade storage network for P10 billion

March 10, 2025 | 9:04 pm



REUTERS

THE National Food Authority (NFA) said on Monday that its rice storage, milling, and drying facilities will be modernized in a P10-billion program.

The funding will consist of P5 billion from last year's budget and P5 billion from this year.

The NFA said P1.5 billion will be dedicated to repairing current warehouses to ensure rice quality.

Some P3.5 billion will go towards adding 800,000 metric tons (MT) of storage capacity by next year.

"This expanded capacity will help us address the current issue of warehouse space," NFA Administrator Larry D. Lacon said.

The NFA's current storage capacity is 1 million MT, with full utilization hindered by variations in rice quality and age of the inventory.

"The new warehouses, combined with updated milling and drying equipment, will maximize storage efficiency," the NFA said.

It said the P5 billion set aside for mills, dryers, and silos will increase rice recovery rates, and ultimately improve farmer incomes.

"With the new drying facilities, farmers will be able to sell palay with higher moisture content, removing the burden of drying it themselves," the NFA said.

"This change is expected to stabilize prices for both producers and consumers by ensuring consistent rice quality."

The NFA said warehouse repairs are underway, including facilities in Malolos, Bulacan, which is capable of storing up to 120,000 50-kilo bags of rice, to get it ready to receive grain during the peak of the harvest in April. Several plots of land have been donated to the NFA or made available via usufruct, making possible the construction of new warehouses in Mindanao and Luzon.

The modernization projects are expected to be operational by the end of next year, in time for the dry season harvest of 2027.

The full upgrade program will include silos in major rice-producing areas such as the Cagayan Valley and Central Luzon, allowing the NFA to store rice for up to two years, far longer than the usual six months to one year for bagged rice. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/03/10/658459/nfa-to-upgrade-storage-network-for-p10-billion/>

**REMATE:**

## 59 biik naharang sa Quezon

March 10, 2025 12:10



LUCENA CITY- Para maiwasan ang pagkalat ng African swine fever (ASF) o sakit na dumadapo lalo pang pinaigting ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Calauag pagpasok at paglabas ng mga hayop na walang kaukulang dokumento sa probinsya ng Quezon.

Ito’y matapos maharang ang 59 biik sakay ng L300 van at walang kaukulang dokumento noong Linggo sa nasabing bayan.

Sa report ng Quezon Police Provincial Office, bandang alas-9:45 ng gabi, dumaan sa kahabaan ng Maharlika Highway, sakop ng Barangay Sumulong, ang isang L300 van na minamaneho ng isang “John” karga ang 59 biik.

Katuwang ang mga tauhan ng Municipal Agriculture, pinahinto ang van at hiningan ng mga kaukulang papeles si John sa mga karga nitong biik subalit bigo itong maipakita na dadalhin niya sana sa bayan ng Candelaria.

Nahaharap ngayon sa kasong paglabag si John sa kautusan ng Department of Agriculture Administrative Order No.5, na ipinatupad noong 2019 na nagtatakda ng mga alituntunin para sa lokal na transportasyon ng mga hayop, produkto ng hayop, at mga by-product upang protektahan ang kalusugan ng publiko at labanan ang mga banta sa kalusugan ng hayop.

Ang mga regulasyon ay mahigpit na ipinatutupad para sa pagkuha ng mga permit sa transportasyon at nagtatakda ng mga espesyal na kinakailangan para sa mga partikular na hayop at produkto. **Mary Anne**

**Sapico**

<https://remate.ph/59-biik-naharang-sa-quezon/>

**REMATE:**

# Pagbebenta ng NFA rice sa mga LGU exempted sa election spending ban

March 10, 2025 10:54



MANILA, Philippines- Inaprubahan ng Commission on Elections (Comelec) ang hiling n Department of Agriculture (DA) na hayaan ang pagbebenta ng bigas ng National Food Authority (NFA) sa local government units (LGUs) mula sa spending ban para sa May 2025 midterm elections.

Sa isang memorandum na nilagdaan ni Comelec Chair George Erwin Garcia at inilabas sa mga mamamahayag noong Linggo, sinabi ng law department ng poll body na ang pagbebenta ng bigas ng NFA sa mga LGU ay hindi nasa ilalim ng mga paghihigpit sa paggastos na nakabalangkas sa Section 261 (v) ng Omnibus Election Code.

Ipinagbabawal ng probisyon ang pamamahagi ng mga pampublikong pondo para social welfare at services projects sa panahon ng election period.

Gayunman, nilinaw ng Comelec na ang naturang proyekto ay binibigyang kahulugan bilang mga hakbangin ng gobyerno na naglalayong tulungan ang mga disadvantaged o vulnerable na sektor ng lipunan.

Paliwanag ng Comelec, bagama't hindi nililimitahan ang pagbebenta ng bigas, ang mga LGU ay maaaring sumailalim sa pagbabawal kung gagamit sila ng pampublikong pondo sa pagbili ng

bigas sa loob ng 45 araw bago ang araw ng halalan, maaaring ipamahagi ito bilang tulong sa mga mahihinang sektor o ibenta ito sa subsidized rate.

Sa ganitong mga kaso, ang transaksyon ay ituturing na social welfare expenditure, na karaniwang ipinagbabawal maliban kung exempted sa ilalim ng Comelec Resolution No. 11060, dagdag ng poll body. Pinaalalahanan din ng Comelec ang NFA at LGU na sa ilalim ng Section 261 (v), ipinagbabawal ang pag-isyu o paggamit ng treasury warrant at mga katulad na instrumento sa pananalapi para sa mga pagbabayad sa hinaharap gamit ang pampublikong pondo.

Nauna nang nagbigay ang Comelec ng exemption sa 28 mga programa ng Department of Social Welfare and Development (DWSD) mula sa spending ban ng 2025 midterm elections, basta't sumunod sila sa tatlong karagdagang kondisyon para sa mahigpit na pagsunod kabilang rito ang Ayuda sa Kapos ang Kita Program, at Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation o AICS.

Binigyang-diin ni Garcia na dapat istriktong sumunod ang DSWD sa tatlong probisyon na nakasaad sa memorandum:

- Walang mga kandidato o pOlitiko sa panahon ng pamamahagi ng ayuda sa anumang anyo.
- Ibigay sa Comelec ang guidelines na ginawa ng DSWD sa mga pampublikong anunsyo nito.
- Tapat na pagsunod sa mga alituntuning ito ng DSWD at ng mga tauhan at katuwang nito. **Jocelyn Tabangcura-Domenden**

<https://remate.ph/pagbebenta-ng-nfa-rice-sa-mga-lgu-exempted-sa-election-spending-ban/>

**MANILA STANDARD:**

# **NFA unveils P10-b modernization plan to double rice storage capacity**

By Othel V. Campos

March 10, 2025, 8:55 pm

**The National Food Authority (NFA) said Monday it is implementing a P10-billion modernization program to enhance rice storage, build new rice mills and upgrade drying facilities. It said this would help improve rice recovery and boost farmers' profitability.**

Funded through government allocations, half of the budget was released late last year, while the remaining P5 billion is earmarked for rice mills, drying facilities and other infrastructure under this year's national budget.

It said of the 2024 funding, P1.5 billion would go toward repairing warehouses to maintain palay and rice quality, while P3.5 billion would add 800,000 metric tons of storage capacity by next year—nearly doubling the NFA's current capacity.

“This expanded capacity will help address our current space constraints,” said NFA administrator Larry Lacson.

He said while the NFA's existing capacity is 1 million metric tons, inconsistent stock quality and age hinder full utilization.

Lacson said reducing post-harvest inefficiencies would allow farmers to sell palay with higher moisture content, relieving them of drying burdens. This is expected to stabilize prices and ensure consistent rice quality.

“These facilities will be a gamechanger, allowing us to buy rice with moisture levels above the current 14 percent requirement, preventing traders from manipulating moisture levels to lower palay prices,” Lacson said.

Warehouse repairs are already underway, including at the NFA office in Malolos, Bulacan, which can store up to 120,000 50-kilogram bags of rice and will be ready to receive stocks during the peak summer harvest in April.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314567161/nfa-unveils-p10-b-modernization-plan-to-double-rice-storage-capacity.html>

**MANILA STANDARD:**

## **Price ceiling.**



By Manila Standard  
March 11, 2025, 2:18 am

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. announces that the government is implementing a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for pork in National Capital Region wet markets to ease the financial strain on consumers grappling with high meat prices. Starting March 10, the government set an MSRP of P380 per kilogram for liempo and P350 per kg. for kasim and pigue.

<https://manilastandard.net/gallery/314567171/price-ceiling-2.html>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Govt imposes MSRP for pork

**By Giselle P. Jordan**

**March 11, 2025**

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) on Monday implemented a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for pork in wet markets in the National Capital Region (NCR).

The MSRP is P380 per kilogram for liempo (pork sides) and P350 per kilogram for kasim (shoulder) and pigue (leg).

For "sabit ulo" or the price at which traders pass on pork to retailers, the MSRP is P300 per kilogram.

"This decision was made after consultations with industry stakeholders — from producers to wholesalers, traders and retailers. We believe the MSRP will help ensure the sustainability of the pork industry, which continues to suffer from ASF's adverse effects," Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

However, pork sold in supermarkets and other modern markets is exempt from the implementation of the MSRP.

The MSRP on pork will be reviewed after a month to assess if adjustments are necessary.

With the MSRP in place, the DA hopes to ease pork prices.

Last month, Deputy National Statistician Divina Gracia del Prado said the DA's efforts on stabilizing prices, especially of rice, contributed to the slower inflation in February.

She noted that the DA's implementation of an MSRP on imported rice significantly reduced the price of the commodity.

Del Prado added that an MSRP on pork could also have the same effect.

We expect that if an MSRP is implemented — and given all other things constant — it could slow down inflation on pork, even resulting in negative inflation," she said.

Undersecretary for Livestock Dante Palabrica said that pork industry players showed willingness to support the DA's efforts to lower the prices of pork. "They've recognized that if prices stay above P400 per kilo, consumers may shift to imported pork or other protein sources like chicken and fish."

National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. chairman Chester Warren Yeo Tan backed the initiative, saying the MSRP will be helpful in stabilizing pork prices not only for the welfare of consumers but of the pork industry as well.

Rolando Tambago, president of the Pork Producers Federation of the Philippines (ProPork), said that the measure is necessary for the stability of the pork industry.

Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura chairman Rosendo So also lauded the DA's efforts, saying they are also doing their part to help lessen the burdens of Filipino consumers.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/11/news/national/govt-imposes-msrp-for-pork/2070419>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **NFA's P10-billion modernization boosts storage, processing**

Ada Pelonia

March 10, 2025

THE National Food Authority (NFA) will allot P10 billion for a modernization program aimed at boosting its storage and processing capacity.

The grains agency said the initiative would be funded through government allocations, with 50 percent of the budget granted last year and the remaining P5 billion included in the 2025 national budget.

The NFA said P1.5 billion would be earmarked for repairing existing warehouses to preserve the quality of palay and rice, while the P3.5 billion will be used to add 800,000 metric tons (MT) of storage capacity by next year.

NFA Administrator Larry Lacson said the new and upgraded warehouses will improve the grains agency's ability to store rice and palay, allowing for better management of the national rice inventory.

"This expanded capacity will help us address the current issue where our warehouse space is almost full," Lacson said in a statement.

The NFA explained that while its current storage capacity stands at 1 million metric tons (MMT), varying rice stock quality and age often hinder full utilization.

With this, the agency said the new warehouses, combined with updated milling and drying equipment, would maximize storage efficiency.

Processing efficiency

Meanwhile, the remaining P5 billion for rice mills, dryers, and silos would focus on improving processing efficiency, increasing rice recovery rates, and enhancing farmers' livelihoods.

With the new drying facilities, the NFA said farmers could sell palay with higher moisture content, removing the burden of drying it themselves. This would help stabilize prices for producers and consumers by ensuring consistent rice quality.

"These facilities will be a game changer for the NFA, enabling us to purchase rice with moisture content above the current 14 percent requirement," Lacson added. This would prevent traders from potentially manipulating moisture levels in palay to drive down prices, he explained.

According to the NFA chief, several plots of land have been donated to the grains agency or made available for use through usufruct agreements for the construction of new warehouses in Mindanao and Luzon.

"Notably, the land in Mindoro is crucial, as the region's current storage capacity falls far short of demand." The NFA said the modernization projects are expected to be operational by the end of next year, in time for the summer harvest of 2027.

It added that the full upgrade across all regions would include silos in major rice-producing areas such as Cagayan Valley and Central Luzon, allowing the NFA to store rice for up to two years, longer than the usual six months to one year timeframe for bagged rice.

Despite the increased storage capacity, Lacson stressed the need for regulatory reforms that would allow the NFA to manage rice buffer stocks more effectively and regularly free up storage space for the procurement of palay.

"Ideally, one-twelfth of our buffer stocks should be disposed of each month to facilitate better reserve management," he said.

The law currently prohibits the grains agency from intervening in the market by selling its rice stocks to the public.



However, upon the recommendation of the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC), the Department of Agriculture (DA) declared a food security emergency, which allowed it to release NFA rice reserves to local government units (LGUs) and other agencies to reduce the prices of the food staple.

This year, the NFA is targeting to procure as much as 880,000 MT of palay to meet its new buffer stock requirement of 15 days as stipulated under the amended Rice Tariffication Law (RTL).

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/10/nfas-p10-billion-modernization-boosts-storage-processing/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# PSA: Agri trade gap narrows in January

BusinessMirror and Bless Aubrey Ogerio  
March 10, 2025

THE country's agricultural trade gap narrowed in January 2025 as export receipts improved during the period, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Preliminary data from PSA showed a \$1-billion agricultural trade deficit for the month, lower by 2.8 percent than the \$1.29 billion recorded a year ago.

Overall agricultural trade, meanwhile, climbed to \$2.43 billion in January, 15.4 percent higher than last year's \$2.01 billion.

The country earned \$715.25 million from outbound shipments of agricultural products, a 32.8-percent jump from \$538.68 million a year ago. These accounted for 11.2 percent of the country's total exports for the month.

"The top 10 commodity groups in terms of value of agricultural exports contributed \$699.89 million or 97.9 percent to the total agricultural export revenue in January 2025. The combined agricultural export value of these top 10 commodity groups posted an annual increase of 33.6 percent during the month," the PSA said. Leading the list were animal and vegetable fats and oils, which generated \$263.87 million or 36.9 percent of total agricultural exports.

Exports to Asean countries reached \$118.19 million, accounting for 12.4 percent of total exports to the region. The top three exports were fats and oils (\$63.98 million), tobacco products (\$26.07 million) and cocoa preparations (\$5.29 million).

Malaysia was the top buyer, accounting for \$77.56 million, or 65.6 percent of total exports to Asean.

Meanwhile, agricultural imports reached \$1.72 billion in January, comprising 15 percent of total imports.

This was 9.4 percent higher than the \$1.57 billion recorded in January 2024.

"The top 10 commodity groups in terms of value of agricultural imports amounted to \$1.41 billion or 82.3 percent of the total agricultural import revenue in January 2025. The combined agricultural import value of these top 10 commodity groups posted an annual increase of 4.4 percent in January 2025 relative to its value in the same month of 2024," the agency said.

Among the groups, cereals topped the list, accounting for \$328.02 million or 19.1 percent of total imports.

Agricultural imports from Asean countries hit \$660.53 million in January, making up 21.8 percent of total imports from the region. The top imports were fats and oils (\$171.86 million), cereals (\$146.94 million), and miscellaneous edible preparations (\$121.64 million).

Vietnam remained the top supplier of cereals to the Philippines, accounting for \$192.16 million, or 29.1 percent of total Asean agricultural imports.

According to PSA, the International Merchandise Trade Statistics serve a key role in computing the balance of payments, estimating national accounts and guiding policy formulation for economic planning and trade agencies. It also supports research and other relevant initiatives.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/10/psa-agri-trade-gap-narrows-in-january/>

**MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT:**

# **NFA pushes P10B modernization program to enhance facilities**

*By Jed Macapagal*

March 11, 2025

THE National Food Authority (NFA) is pursuing a P10 billion modernization program to enhance rice storage capacities, build new rice mills to upgrade drying facilities, improve rice recovery and increase farmers' profitability.

The initiative is funded through government allocations, with half of the budget granted late last year and the remaining P5 billion included in this year's national budget, NFA said in a statement on Monday.

As part of last year's funding, P1.5 billion will be dedicated to repairing existing warehouses to ensure the preservation of palay (unhusked rice) and rice quality. The remaining P3.5 billion will be used to add 800,000 metric tons (MT) of storage capacity by next year, nearly doubling the NFA's current capacity.

## *Expanding storage capacity*

NFA Administrator Larry Lacson explained the new and upgraded warehouses will significantly improve the NFA's ability to store rice and palay, enabling better management of the national rice inventory.

"This expanded capacity will help us address the current issue where our warehouse space is almost full," Lacson said.

FA added that while its current storage capacity stands at 1 million MT, varying rice stock quality and age often hinder full utilization.

In addition to enhancing storage capacity, the other P5 billion is for the improvement of rice mills, dryers and silos to boost processing efficiency. These will increase rice recovery rates and farmers' earnings, as well as stabilize prices for both producers and consumers by ensuring consistent rice quality.

## *Boosting efficiency*

These facilities will be a game-changer for the NFA, enabling us to purchase rice with moisture content above the current 14 percent requirement," Lacson added.

NFA said such a shift will also prevent traders from manipulating moisture levels in palay to drive down prices.

The agency said warehouse repairs are also ongoing, with facilities such as the one in Malolos, Bulacan now capable of storing up to 120,000 50-kilo bags of rice. They are also scheduled to receive rice stocks during the peak of the summer harvest in April.

Lacson said several plots of land have also been donated to the NFA or made available for use through usufruct agreements for the construction of new warehouses in Mindanao and Luzon.

*In time for 2027 harvest*

NFA said the modernization projects are expected to be operational by the end of next year, in time for the summer harvest of 2027. The full upgrade will be across all regions to include silos in major rice-producing areas such as Cagayan Valley and Central Luzon to store rice for up to two years, compared with the usual six months to one year for bagged rice.

However, Lacson said that even with increased storage capacity, there is still need for regulatory reforms to improve the management of rice buffer stocks and regularly free up storage space for the procurement of palay.

“Ideally, one-twelfth of our buffer stocks should be disposed of each month to facilitate better reserve management,” he said.

At present, the law prohibits the NFA from selling its rice stocks to the public.

Given the recommendation of the National Price Coordinating Council, however, the Department of Agriculture (DA) declared a food security emergency, enabling the DA to release NFA rice reserves to local government units and other agencies to help control high prices of the staple.

This year, the NFA needs to purchase 545,000 MT of palay to maintain a nine-day supply and 880,000 MT to meet the new buffer stock requirement of 15 days, as stipulated under the amended Rice Tariffication Law.

<https://malaya.com.ph/business/corporate/nfa-pushes-p10b-modernization-program-to-enhance-facilities/>

## **MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT:**

# **DOT highlights farm tourism's transformative potential**

**March 7, 2025**

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco reaffirmed the Philippine government's commitment to sustainable development and inclusive economic growth through the promotion of farm tourism at the 8th Philippine International Farm Tourism Conference (PIFTC), held last week at the KCC Mall in General Santos City, South Cotabato.

The three-day conference, organized by the International School of Sustainable Tourism (ISST) in partnership with the DOT, brought together local and international experts, policymakers, farmers, and tourism stakeholders.

The event aimed to highlight General Santos City's potential as a leading destination for sustainable and innovative farm tourism practices.

In her keynote address, Secretary Frasco underscored the transformative potential of farm tourism in driving rural development, ensuring food security, and preserving the Philippines' rich cultural heritage.

“At the heart of farm tourism lies a simple yet powerful idea: our farms are more than just places of production. They are living landscapes of culture, history, and sustainability—where traditions are passed down, innovation takes root, and communities find new pathways to prosperity,” Secretary Frasco said.

“Under the leadership of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., we recognize farm tourism's vital role in contributing to our nation's prosperity. Guided by the National Tourism Development Plan, the DOT is committed to strengthening this sector through programs that empower local communities and promote sustainable agricultural practices,” she added.

With the theme “Innovations in Farm Tourism: Cultivating Growth and Sustainability,” the conference spotlighted success stories from across the country, including bio-diversified farming initiatives that have revitalized rural communities, such as General Santos City's grapes farming as an emerging industry.

Frasco reaffirmed the DOT's dedication to positioning farm tourism as a vital pillar of the country's tourism strategy. She also emphasized the importance of collaboration among government agencies, local government units, and private stakeholders to ensure the sector's sustainability and growth.

“By embracing our agricultural heritage and unlocking new opportunities in farm tourism, we cultivate a future where agriculture and tourism bring prosperity to our rural communities—while preserving these vital livelihoods for generations to come,” she remarked.

One of the conference's highlights was the turnover of hosting duties from General Santos City to Baguio City for the next PIFTC installment.

Secretary Frasco, alongside ISST Chairperson and former DOT Secretary Mina Gabor and General Santos Councilor Virgie Tiongson Llido, presided over the ceremonial handover of hosting duties, underscoring the importance of continuity in the promotion of sustainable farm tourism across the Philippines.

<https://malaya.com.ph/weekly-features/travel-tourism/dot-highlights-farm-tourisms-transformative-potential/>

**ABANTE TONITE:**

# **MSRP sa karneng baboy pinalagan**

**March 10, 2025**

**Umangal ang mga tindero at trader sa pinatupad na maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) ng karneng baboy simula nitong Lunes, Marso 10.**

Ayon sa ilang tindero sa wet market sa Quezon City, kung ipipilit ng Department of Agriculture na P350 per kilo sa laman at P380 bawat kilo sa liempo, mas mabuting isara na lang umano ang kanilang puwesto dahil sa liit ng kanilang kikitain.

Katuwiran pa nila, ang mga trader lamang ang kikita sa ipatutupad na MSRP pero depensa ng mga trader, P315 per kilo lamang ang bagsak nila dahil ang farm gate price ay P255 per kilo. Ang kaunting patong umano nila ay para sa operating expenses.

Sabi naman ni Nicanor Briones ng Pork Producers Federation of the Philippines, nagkasundo na ang mga magbababoy na ibagsak sa P230 per kilo ang farmgate price.

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/03/10/msrp-sa-karneng-baboy-pinalagan/>

**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:**

# **NFA naglaan ng P10 bilyong para mapaingting rice storage program**

Angie dela Cruz

March 11, 2025 | 12:00am

**MANILA, Philippines** — Naglaan ang National Food Authority (NFA) ng P10 bilyong pondo para sa modernization program sa rice storage, pagtatayo ng bagong rice mills, at pag-upgrade sa drying facilities ng ahensiya.

Ayon kay NFA Administrator Larry Lacson, layon ng modernisasyon na mapaganda ang rice recovery at mapataas ang kita ng mga magsasaka sa bansa.

Aniya ang pondo ay mula sa sa government allocations kung saan ang P1.5 bilyon ay ilalaan sa repair sa mga NFA warehouses para sa pag iimbak ng palay at bigas.

Sa naturang pondo, ang may P3.5 bilyon naman ay ilalaan para sa dagdag na 800,000 metric tons na storage capacity ng NFA.

Sinabi pa ni Lacson na ang P5 billion program para sa rice mills, dryers, at silos ay naka-focus sa processing efficiency, pagtataas ng rice recovery rates at iba pa.

Unang aayusin ng NFA ang warehouse sa Malolos, Bulacan na may 120,000 50-kilo bags of rice na capacity. Inaasahang magiging fully operational ang modernization projects sa susunod na taon.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/metro/2025/03/11/2427475/nfa-naglaan-ng-p10-bilyong-para-mapaingting-rice-storage-program>