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MANILA BULLETIN:

DA upbeat about Japan reducing tariffs on banana exports

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Mar 17, 2025 04:27 PM



The Department of Agriculture (DA) is positive that Japan will consider the Philippines' proposal for reduced tariffs on banana exports in a bid to strengthen its market share on the popular commodity.

In a press briefing on Monday, March 17, DA Spokesperson and Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said this was the agency's primary concern during a visit to Japan last week.

Under the Philippines-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (PJEPA), Japan imposes 18 percent tariff during the winter season and eight percent tariff during summer.

De Mesa said this tariff rate is evidently high compared to other countries in which Japan does not impose any tariff.

The Philippines leads the market share of bananas in Japan; however, reports said Peru and Ecuador are now gaining ground—these South American nations have zero tariffs.

In 2024, bananas from the country had a 75-percent market share in Japan. This, however, was as high as 90 percent more than a decade ago.

In a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), it noted that higher tariffs are hold-overs from earlier times when revenue gains were sought, or domestic industries were to be protected.

De Mesa said the DA's delegation to Japan, including Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, met with officials from Japan's legislative branch to discuss the prospect of lowering the tariff.

While Japan has not yet committed, the official said the Asian economic giant is prepared to review the country's proposal.

He added that the agency has an amount in mind for the tariff, noting that this is a "very urgent" situation. "Importante na mapababa 'yung taripa na ini-impose ng Japan doon sa ating mga export bananas para masigurado na mas competitive ang presyo ng saging sa Japan at 'yung ating mga exporters, mapalago pa lalo 'yung industriya ng saging sa ating bansa,'" he explained.

(It is important to lower the tariff imposed by Japan on our export bananas to ensure that the price of our bananas remains competitive in Japan and that our exporters can further grow the banana industry in our country.)

Alongside bananas, the Philippines also has a strong market share in various agricultural commodities such as pineapple, mangoes, Hass avocado, and desiccated coconut.

De Mesa said the DA is looking into boosting the export potential of the country's produce to help strengthen the agriculture industry, as well as in pursuit of a stable food security.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/17/da-upbeat-about-japan-reducing-tariffs-on-banana-exports>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Meat imports rise 50% in January

Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas - The Philippine Star

March 18, 2025 | 12:00am



Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) data showed that meat imports during the reference month reached nearly 138,000 MT, about 46,000 MT higher than the 92,021 MT recorded in the same period last year.

STAR / Jesse Bustos

MANILA, Philippines — The country's meat imports in January surged by half year-on-year to over 130,000 metric tons (MT) on the back of higher purchases of key meat products, as domestic production remained lackluster.

Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) data showed that meat imports during the reference month reached nearly 138,000 MT, about 46,000 MT higher than the 92,021 MT recorded in the same period last year.

The country's imports of pork, chicken meat and beef, which accounted for 98.5 percent of the total volume, all grew on an annual basis.

Local pork production remains insufficient to meet the country's overall demand for the meat product, resulting in higher imports, the Meat Importers and Traders Association (MITA) said.

Pork prices have also remained elevated with some cuts reaching as high as P470 per kilo because of the domestic supply shortfall.

Pork imports surged by 65 percent to 70,449 MT from 42,607 MT with imports of both bellies and cuts growing by double-digit rates.

Imports of pork bellies went up by 87 percent year-on-year to 11,148 MT from 5,963 MT while pork cuts rose by 58 percent to 25,760 MT, based on BAI data.

Furthermore, consumers have shifted toward cheaper alternatives like chicken meat and even to beef as the price difference with pork has become relatively thinner than ever as pork prices remained high.

This incentivized traders and importers to bring in more foreign supplies to meet the growing demand for higher animal protein products, MITA said.

Whole chicken prices in Metro Manila range from P160 to P240 per kilo while beef ranges from P350 to P510 per kilo depending on the cut, according to the Department of Agriculture.

"Unless the hog industry can return to previous production level and at competitive pricing, imports will continue to grow," MITA president emeritus Jesus Cham said.

Chicken meat imports rose by 48 percent year-on-year to 45,631 MT from 30,794 MT. Imports of chicken cuts, leg quarters and mechanically deboned meat all grew on an annual basis.

Chicken cut imports expanded by nearly 60 percent year-on-year to 6,926 MT while purchases of chicken leg quarters abroad rose by 53 percent to 12,462 MT, according to BAI data.

Imports of chicken MDM, a vital ingredient used by processors to produce items like hotdogs and meat loaves, increased by 48 percent to 24,226 MT from 16,328 MT.

Beef imports, meanwhile, expanded by half to 19,895 MT from 13,181 MT, BAI data showed.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/03/18/2429095/meat-imports-rise-50-january>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

P45 rice max SRP may start March 31 – DA

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

March 18, 2025 | 12:00am

Rice retailers unload newly delivered P38 per kilo Kadiwa ng Pangulo rice at the Kamuning Market in Quezon City on February 3, 2025.

Michael Varcas / The Philippine STAR

MANILA, Philippines — The maximum suggested retail price (SRP) of P45 per kilo of imported rice will push through on March 31, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said yesterday.

Initially set at P58 per kilo on Jan. 20, the rice max SRP declined to P49 per kilo on March 1.

A lower max SRP is achievable amid the continued decline of rice prices in the world market and a stronger peso, Department of Agriculture (DA) spokesman Arnel de Mesa said.

The farmgate price of palay will not be affected by the reduced rice max SRP, he said.

Meanwhile, De Mesa said implementation of the food security emergency will be boosted by the Commission on Elections' ruling that the sale of the National Food Authority (NFA)'s rice stocks to local government units (LGUs) is not covered by the election spending ban.

The DA, he said, is hoping that LGUs will be encouraged to buy NFA rice so that warehouses will be freed of stocks in time for local farmers' harvest.

Only San Juan, Camarines Sur and Navotas withdrew rice from NFA warehouses, De Mesa noted.

"At least 25 LGUs nationwide have transactional request agreements with the NFA," he said.

The peak harvest for the dry season started this month and will last until April.

Farmers depressed

Depressed palay prices have forced three Nueva Ecija farmers to attempt suicide as traders bought their produce for as low as P15 per kilo, former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor said yesterday.

"I confirmed the veracity of these reports during my meetings with farmers yesterday in the towns of Guimba and Talavera in Nueva Ecija," Montemayor said.

Some farmers in Nueva Ecija took their lives recently due to the low farmgate price of palay, Magsasaka party-list chairman Argel Joseph Cabatbat said in a separate radio interview.

"They were despondent over their failure to pay their debts due to the extremely low palay prices, pegged at P15 per kilo and below, caused by unlimited importation of cheap rice, especially at this time of harvest," Montemayor said.

Around 150,000 farmers from Nueva Ecija and other Central Luzon provinces will hold a rally at the Quezon bypass road on Saturday, from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m., Montemayor said.

The DA should ask President Marcos to stop rice importation during the ongoing harvest period or impose safeguard duties to discourage imports, he said.

Promote biofertilizer

The DA should use the P2-billion budget allocated by Congress to promote a biofertilizer that has been in the market for 20 years, according to former University of the Philippines president and National Scientist Emil Javier.

At the inauguration of a P300-million biofertilizer plant in Sta. Rosa, Laguna on Sunday, Javier said market penetration for the biofertilizer remains a challenge.

Javier is one of the Filipino scientists who developed the biofertilizer at the UP Los Baños.

The current market for the biofertilizer is only less than one percent covering 50,000 to 60,000 hectares, he noted.

“We have seven million hectares. We realized we have to change the business model. We have to rely on the private sector,” he said.

A farmer can save up to P2,500 per hectare by using the biofertilizer, Javier said.

“Based on our estimation, for every hectare of rice and corn, one kilo of Bio N biofertilizer will replace the equivalent two bags of urea,” he said.

“One bag of urea is P1,500 or P3,000 for two bags per hectare. The cost of Bio N is P500, so your net is P2,500. The farmer will save that amount of money because he uses Bio N,” he added.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/03/18/2429179/p45-rice-max-srp-may-start-march-31-da>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

China fuels Philippines pineapple exports to record \$787 million earnings in 2024

Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas - The Philippine Star

March 18, 2025 | 12:00am



Earnings from exports of pineapples and pineapple products went up by 7.5 percent on an annual basis to \$787.12 million, the PSA said.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — China’s growing appetite for pineapples pushed the Philippines’ export of the prized commodity to record earnings of almost \$800 million last year, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said.

Earnings from exports of pineapples and pineapple products went up by 7.5 percent on an annual basis to \$787.12 million, the PSA said.

More than half of the export receipts came from shipments of fresh or dried pineapples, which rose by a little over a fifth year-on-year to \$428.74 million, PSA data showed.

The country exported \$183.43 million worth of pineapples to China last year, almost 18 percent higher than the \$155.73 million recorded in 2023. China remained as the top destination for the country’s pineapples.

The Philippines also shipped a record volume of 675,540 MT of fresh or dried pineapples last year, with 42 percent or about 282,460 MT going to China, based on PSA data.

The United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) earlier said that Philippine pineapple exports in 2024 would rise to a new record level as Chinese consumers demand more premium pineapples, especially the MD2 variety from the Philippines.

“The long shelf life, year-round production cycle and attractive price-to-quality ratio of the MD2 pineapples, the main variety cultivated in the Philippines, proved to be a particularly strong selling point,” the FAO said in a report.

The Philippines has been China’s top supplier of pineapples, accounting for about 90 percent of the Asian country’s annual import volume in the past two decades.

The Philippines has also been the world’s second biggest exporter of pineapples, behind only Costa Rica in the past 15 years, according to the FAO.

Industry players have emphasized that pineapple would be the Philippines’ next billion-dollar export product because of growing global demand.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and FAO have projected that one out of four pineapples produced in the Philippines would be exported by 2033

“The Philippines is one of the major exporters of pineapples and it is expected that this trend remains stable over the coming 10 years. The share in global exports is not changing strongly,” OECD senior agricultural policy analyst Hubertus Gay told The STAR in an earlier interview.

The country’s export of other pineapple products last year also posted growth particularly in the shipments of prepared and preserved pineapples as well as unfermented pineapple juice.

Export earnings from prepared or preserved pineapples rose by two percent year-on-year to \$220.49 million while the value of unfermented pineapple juice exports expanded by 35 percent to \$101.68 million.

Meanwhile, exports of pineapple juice with a brix value not exceeding 20 fell by more than half year-on-year to \$36.21 million.

Local pineapple production last year was valued at nearly P30 billion, accounting for some two percent of the country’s P1.8-trillion gross value added in agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

Volume wise, the country’s pineapple production has been on an upward trend, reaching almost three million MT in 2024. It was some 800,000 MT higher than the almost 2.2 million MT recorded output 15 years ago.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/03/18/2429107/china-fuels-philippines-pineapple-exports-record-787-million-earnings-2024>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Pork sellers largely ignoring MSRP — DA

March 17, 2025 | 8:20 pm



PORK meat products are sold at the Murphy Market in Cubao, Quezon City, Feb. 11, 2021. — PHILIPPINE STAR/ MICHAEL VARCAS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said compliance with the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for pork has been spotty over a week after the scheme took effect.

The compliance rate among about 170 retailers monitored by the DA was 20%, Agriculture spokesman Arnel V. de Mesa told reporters.

Retailers have failed to comply with the MSRP because the price set by traders remains high, he said, even though the farmgate price for hogs has decreased.

On March 10, the MSRP was set at P380 per kilo for *liempo* (belly) and at P350 per kilo for *kasim* (shoulder) and *pigue* (rear leg).

The DA has also imposed a maximum suggested price of P300 per kilo for *sabit ulo*, the price at which traders pass on pork to retailers.

Pork sold in so-called “modern markets” such as supermarkets and hypermarkets is exempt from the MSRP scheme due to their higher operating costs.

Mr. De Mesa said farmgate prices have fallen to as little as P220.

“So, why can’t it reach P300 when in fact they agreed that the profit margin for viajeros (traders) should be P70 pesos?” he said.

The government first applied the MSRP approach to rice.

Mr. De Mesa said the DA was expecting the pork MSRP to be more broadly observed because hogs need to be sold in markets immediately after they are butchered.

“It’s not like rice that you can store for a longer time,” he said.

The level of compliance after the first week of the MSRP for rice was 40-45%.

Mr. De Mesa said prevailing prices remain high for pork belly (P420 per kilo) and rear leg (P380). — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/03/17/659928/pork-sellers-largely-ignoring-msrp-da/>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

FPA taking new approach in regulating biofertilizers

March 17, 2025 | 8:14 pm



SHUTTERSTOCK

THE Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA) said its oversight of biofertilizers will be “developmental,” easing the permit process to hasten their greater adoption.

It said the new regulatory approach applies to “emerging products” such as biofertilizer, biopesticide and bio stimulants, FPA Office-in-Charge and Executive Director Glenn DC. Estrada told reporters.

He noted that Southeast Asia has been embracing biofertilizer in light of the rising prices of inorganic fertilizer following the Russia-Ukraine war.

Biofertilizer gained traction in the Philippines in 2022 when the Department of Agriculture (DA) promoted a balanced fertilization program, Mr. Estrada noted.

“We are taking on the developmental side of the regulations,” he said, “rather than being too restrictive about it.”

The FPA has registered multiple biofertilizer products and is seeking to further ease the application process by going paperless.

Product registrations with the agency typically take over a year to process, Mr. Estrada noted.

“We started with fertilizer (applications); perhaps in a matter of six months, we can also do digital payments,” he said.

Mr. Estrada said the FPA is working with government and private laboratories to harmonize how they test fertilizers and pesticides.

“It’s a laboratory recognition program, so anywhere you can test (the product),” he said, noting that the agency only has one laboratory.

The FPA said it is seeking P1 billion over three years to establish more locally accessible facilities.

The FPA budget is about P200 million, of which P115 million goes to personnel, Mr. Estrada noted. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/03/17/659922/fpa-taking-new-approach-in-regulating-biofertilizers/>

REMATE:

Presyo ng bigas patuloy na bumababa sa MSRP – DA

March 17, 2025 18:52



MANILA, Philippines – Ipinagmalaki ng Department of Agriculture na naging epektibo ang pagpapatupad ng maximum suggested retail price sa bigas para tuluyang mapababa ang presyo ng imported na bigas sa merkado.

Sinabi ng DA, mula sa P64 kada kilo na presyuhan ng imported rice bago ang MSRP, ngayon ay nasa P49 na lamang ang kada kilo nito alinsunod sa MSRP noong Marso 1.

Ayon kay Agriculture Sec. Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr., posible pang bumaba ang MSRP bago matapos ang Marso kung patuloy na bababa ang pandaigdigang presyo ng bigas at mananatiling matatag ang halaga ng piso kontra dolyar.

Nabatid sa DA sa ngayon, bumaba na rin ang landed cost ng imported rice mula Vietnam sa humigit-kumulang USD490 kada metriko tonelada.

Kaugnay nito, tiniyak naman ni Sec. Tiu Laurel sa publiko na ang pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas at taripa ay hindi makakaapekto sa taunang P30 bilyong pondo para sa Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), na sumusuporta sa lokal na mga magsasaka ng palay sa ilalim ng Rice Tariffication Law (RTL).

Umaasa ang pamahalaan na patuloy pang bababa ang presyo ng bigas upang mas makabili ang mahihirap ng murang presyo ng bigas. *Santi Celario*

<https://remate.ph/presyo-ng-big-as-patuloy-na-bumababa-sa-msrp-da/>

ABANTE:

DA ‘nilangaw’ sa MSRP ng baboy

Abante News

• **March 17, 2025**



Dismayado ang Department of Agriculture (DA) sa mga tindero na hindi sumusunod sa maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) ng karneng baboy.

Inamin ni Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, spokesperson ng DA, na halos 80% ang hindi sumusunod sa pinatutupad na MSRP sa karneng baboy.

“Ito pag-aaralang mabuti ano ang mga issues kung bakit 20% lang,” wika ni De Mesa sa press conference nitong Lunes, Marso 17.

Noong Marso 10 pa pinatupad ang MSRP sa karneng baboy kung saan ang kasim ay dapat P350 per kilo lamang at ang liempo ay P380 bawat kilo.

Ipinatupad ang MSRP dahil sa hindi maawat na pagsirit sa presyo ng karneng baboy sa bansa. Isa sa itinuturong dahilan ay ang problema sa African Swine Fever.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/03/17/da-nilangaw-sa-msrp-ng-baboy/>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Low palay prices drive farmers to death

By Giselle P. Jordan

March 18, 2025

LOW palay prices have driven at least three Nueva Ecija farmers to death, Magsasaka Party-list chairman Argel Joseph Cabatbat revealed in a radio interview.

Former agriculture secretary and Magsasaka Party-list nominee Leonardo Montemayor said he has confirmed these reports through his meetings with farmers in the towns of Guimba and Talavera in Nueva Ecija.

Montemayor said palay prices are currently at P15 per kilogram (kg) or lower, which leaves farmers in despair as they fail to pay their debts.

However, Department of Agriculture (DA) spokesman Arnel de Mesa said on Monday that the average palay prices in Central Luzon are at P22/kg to P23/kg, as reported by the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice).

Earlier this month, National Food Authority (NFA) Administrator Larry Lacson said rice millers are buying clean and dry palay at P20/kg to P22/kg, with wet palay usually bought at P5 lower per kilogram.

The NFA also raised its palay buying price earlier this month, buying at P18/kg for fresh palay and P24/kg for clean and dry palay.

Montemayor blames the "unlimited importation of cheap rice," for the low palay prices, especially now that the harvest season is currently ongoing.

In 2019, the Philippine government implemented Republic Act (RA) 11203, or the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), which lifted the quantitative import restriction on rice and replaced it with tariffs instead.

Nueva Ecija farmers are planning to hold a protest on Saturday, March 22, at the Quezon Bypass Road to call the attention of the public on their plight. Up to 150,000 farmers are expected to be in attendance.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/18/regions/low-palay-prices-drive-farmers-to-death/2074391>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA finds low compliance with pork MSRP

Ada Pelonia

March 17, 2025

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said only a fifth of retailers in Metro Manila followed the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for pork imposed by the government.

Citing the latest report from the DA's Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said only 20 percent of over 170 Metro Manila stalls monitored have complied with the MSRP for pork.

He added that the compliance with MSRP for "sabit ulo" at P300 per kilo, or the price at which traders pass on pork to retailers, stood below 10 percent.

"If they are not compliant with 'sabit ulo,' therefore (retailers) would really have a hard time complying with the MSRP of P350 to P380 (per kilo). So, we will focus on that," De Mesa told reporters in a press briefing on Monday.

He noted that the farmgate price of pork was already on a downward trend and has fallen to as much as P220 per kilo from P250 per kilo.

"So, this means the prices agreed upon during the meetings were not followed based on the level of compliance," he said.

He noted that the DA will hold another meeting to determine the causes for the low compliance rate despite holding consultations with stakeholders.

However, De Mesa also noted that the agency is mulling over allowing the government to intervene in the market if high retail pork prices would persist.

This would be done through the Food Terminal Inc. (FTI) which will purchase local pork and sell it at a lower price.

The DA imposed the MSRP on pork in Metro Manila wet markets starting March 10 at P380 per kilo for pork belly or liempo and P350 per kilo for kasim or pork shoulder and pigue or pork ham.

The agency said the move to impose an MSRP on pork aims to ease the financial strain on consumers reeling from the surge in meat prices.

Furthermore, the DA said it decided to impose an MSRP on pork following consultations with industry stakeholders, such as producers, wholesalers, traders, and retailers, who said this move would ensure the pork industry's sustainability, which continues to suffer from the ASF's adverse effects.

Retail prices of pork ham in Metro Manila markets range from P340 to P410 per kilo, while pork belly is being sold at P355 to P470 per kilo, based on the latest government price monitoring report.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/17/da-finds-low-compliance-with-pork-msrp/>