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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Taiwan's crop diversification seen aligned with DA's vow to boost farmers' income

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Mar 24, 2025 05:51 AM



The Department of Agriculture's (DA) commitment to helping farmers diversify crops in a bid to increase their income closely mirrors Taiwan's agricultural approach, according to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel.

Laurel recently visited the demonstration farm of the Taiwan Technical Mission (TTM) in Tarlac, which serves as a regional hub for agricultural training, research, and extension services.

The TTM farm, funded under the Taiwan International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF), equips farmers, agricultural officers, and students with up-to-date knowledge and practical skills related to the latest developments in the industry.

In a statement, Laurel noted that TTM's strategies "aligns perfectly" with the DA's goals.

"Taiwan's approach to managing pests, typhoons, and flooding is exactly what the DA wants to foster, helping farmers diversify their crops and increase their income," he said.

The DA and TTM are currently collaborating on the agri-cluster consolidation and cooperation (ACCC) project, which assists cooperatives through farm inputs, seedlings, and facilities.

Under this, TTM will help farmers establish market linkages with suppliers to guarantee stable demand and profitability.

The project also introduces a high-value crop production model that aims to enhance agricultural resilience and disaster reduction systems.

A major beneficiary of the ACCC project is the Tarlac-based Sembrano Climate Resilient Farmers Agriculture Cooperative (SCRFAC).

SCRFAC consists of 140 members cultivating 134 hectares (ha) for rice production and 60 ha for onion production in Gerona town, Tarlac.

"Recognizing the potential of SCRFAC, the DA has provided the cooperative with a cold storage facility for onions under the high-value crop development program, as well as a warehouse with a mechanical dryer under the rice program," said Laurel.

"These facilities will serve as postharvest storage for their rice and onion produce, ensuring better preservation, enhancing crop quality, and empowering farmers," he added.

In December last year, SCRFAC was certified under the Philippine Good Agricultural Practice (PhilGAP) for rice and vegetable production.

This certification ensures that the cooperative's crops are approved for food consumption while also promoting environmental protection and safeguarding farmers' health and safety.

According to the DA, the ACCC project seeks to diversify Filipino farmers from rice production into vegetable farming by introducing crop rotation into their system.

It noted that this would allow farmers to improve their cash flow. For instance, farmers can generate an additional ₱200,000 per four-month production cycle by cultivating tomatoes on a 1,000-square-meter plot or earn an extra ₱80,000 per eight-month cycle by growing chili peppers.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/24/taiwan-s-crop-diversification-seen-aligned-with-da-s-vow-to-boost-farmers-income>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# DA: Pork max SRP violators face NBI, PNP probes

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

March 24, 2025 | 12:00am



Pork retailers display meats at their shops inside a public market in Marikina on March 10, 2025 morning.

Walter Bollozos / The Philippine STAR

MANILA, Philippines — The government may tap the services of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and Philippine National Police (PNP) to go after violators of the maximum suggested retail price (SRP) for pork products amid the measly 25 percent compliance, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said yesterday.

Agriculture spokesman Arnel de Mesa said that the DA is only being lenient to allow stakeholders to adjust and eventually comply with the max SRP for pork products.

“Of course, the DA will do what is provided under the law (in going after violators of max SRP),” De Mesa said.

De Mesa added that there is no reason for stakeholders not to comply with the max SRP as necessary consultations were conducted prior to its implementation.

“If you recall, this was a product of long consultations. We conducted several dialogues, more than a month before we implemented the max SRP on March 10. There was even a last consultation where there was a unanimous decision from the stakeholders, from the producers, traders and retailers to implement the P350 per kilo for pork shoulder and P380 per kilo for pork belly,” he said.

He said that under the cost structure, the farmgate price of producers is at P230 per kilo; a P70 per kilo additional cost will be imposed by traders and P50 per kilo for retailers.

“The DA will go back to that cost structure so that we can determine where the problem is coming from as we came up with the computation. The NBI and PNP will conduct similar investigations to determine who is abusing the agreement,” De Mesa said.

He said that while the compliance for the max SRP is 25 percent, it means that violators comprised 75 percent.

Onion max SRP

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. yesterday said that the DA is eyeing the possible imposition of maximum SRP on imported onions to ensure that the outsourced bulbs remain affordable following the decision to allow the importation of at least 4,000 metric tons (MT) of onions.

“For now, the retail price (of imported onions) is still reasonable but in case it will go up, then we are studying (the possible imposition of max SRP) on imported onions,” Tiu Laurel told The STAR.

Tiu Laurel has said that of the 4,000 MT of allowed volume for imported bulbs, 2,300 MT of imported red onions arrived and of the 1,000 MT of white onions, at least 986 MT of white bulbs entered the country.

Based on DA monitoring of Metro Manila markets, the retail price of local red onions ranged between P70 and P150 per kilo; local white onions, between P50 and P140 per kilo; and imported white onions, between P60 and P140 per kilo.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/03/24/2430643/da-pork-max-srp-violators-face-nbi-pnp-probes>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# DA triples allocation of P29/kilo rice program

**Bella Cariaso** - The Philippine Star

March 24, 2025 | 12:00am



Individuals line up for affordable rice sold at P29 per kilo at the Kadiwa store inside the National Irrigation Administration Office in Quezon City on July 5, 2024.

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — Beneficiaries of the P29 per kilo of rice program may now purchase up to 30 kilos of the staple per month as the Department of Agriculture (DA) tripled the allocation for vulnerable sectors.

Covered by the P29 per kilo of rice program are senior citizens, persons with disabilities, solo parents, indigents and beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program or 4Ps.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the National Food Authority (NFA) supplies the rice stocks.

He said the P29 per kilo of rice is available at Kadiwa ng Pangulo stores.

The DA targets to implement the program nationwide, Tiu Laurel said.

“We urge you to take advantage of this new policy, which responds to the calls of our poor citizens for greater access to more affordable food, especially rice,” he said.

The DA launched the P29 per kilo of rice program in July last year.

The department is also implementing the Rice-for-All program, which allows consumers to buy unlimited amounts of rice at reduced prices.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2025/03/24/2430687/da-triples-allocation-p29kilo-rice-program>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Storm-hit school celebrates World Water Day with tree planting

**Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star**

March 24, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — When Severe Tropical Storm Kristine hit Bugaan West Integrated School in Laurel town in Batangas, only the stage remained visible. The rest of the structures were covered with mud. On March 22, as global communities marked World Water Day, hundreds of volunteers gathered at the school and planted about 400 trees to replace those destroyed by Kristine.

Belen Terrago, Bugaan West Integrated School principal, recalled that logs rolled down from the mountains on Oct. 25, 2024 during the onslaught of the severe tropical storm.

“Only the stage remained visible as an aftermath of Kristine. Just imagine the volume of mud brought by the typhoon. When we returned, our school had almost disappeared. The trees had been uprooted. We are recovering, but there is still much to be done because of the extent of the damage. We need to recover since the education of students is at stake,” Terrago said.

She recalled that the river breached its banks on that day, leading to the collapse of the town’s Bugaan Bridge.

Organized by the non-government organization Americares Philippines, Saturday’s tree planting activity was participated in by students and members of the Philippine National Police, Bureau of Fire Protection and the Departments of Agriculture and of Education.

Paul Gwyn Pagaran, Americares Philippines country director, said Bugaan West Integrated School was chosen for the tree planting activity as it was among the most affected by the typhoon.

“The water from the mountains went down and the trees were destroyed so we need to replace the trees here,” Pagaran said in an interview with The STAR. “We want to raise awareness on the importance of planting trees and how it relates to water as we have to protect our water resources by planting more trees.” He said water buckets were donated to the school to ensure regular watering of the plants.

The school, for its part, will assign students to water the plants regularly to ensure growth for the fruit-bearing trees donated by the Department of Agriculture and the narra plants given by Americares.

“We need to have a multisectoral approach as it is not only the role of the DENR to protect the environment. We need an all-of-society approach to protect the environment and adapt to climate change,” Pagaran said, referring to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2025/03/24/2430704/storm-hit-school-celebrates-world-water-day-tree-planting>



**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# National food branding



**SKETCHES - Ana Marie Pamintuan - The Philippine Star**

March 24, 2025 | 12:00am

Pampango food is scrumptious; the dishes prepared by my favorite cooking teachers, Sylvia Reynosa Gala and her son Ernest will attest to that.

But I can understand why President Marcos vetoed a bill proposing the declaration of Pampanga as the country's culinary capital.

From north to south, other provinces and regions – including BBM's native Ilocos – also have distinctive and delectable cuisines.

Bongbong Marcos would know about food, being an avid cook himself, like his Ate Imee, who has published a cookbook of their family's favorite recipes, mostly Ilocano but also some they picked up while in exile post-EDSA revolt.

The Gala Stars Culinary School has a video of BBM giving a cooking lesson in the school, before he became president.

Sylvia's Kapampangan classmate from Assumption, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo also recently attended a session at Gala Stars.

In promoting our cuisine to the world, we can take inspiration from cultural powerhouse South Korea. Its cuisine promotion has been carried out with coherence and deliberation, with various sectors and government agencies on board.

You must have noticed that many K-dramas draw attention to Korean food and cooking, from traditional to modern gourmet and fast food. I developed an appetite for tteokbokki and jjajangmyeon or noodles in sauce with a base of black soybean paste from watching K-dramas.

We don't have the cohesion of Koreans when it comes to promoting national interest. When they talk about a "whole-of-nation approach" in pursuing a goal, they fully understand and mean it, and they do it. But perhaps we can get some pointers from the global projection of their cuisine.

BBM's veto of the bill ignited discussion on which region or province deserves to be considered the culinary capital.

Since tastes vary, it's more productive and less divisive to work instead for the global recognition of Philippine culinary heritage.

\* \* \*

While there have been many events staged to promote Filipino food to the world, foreigners still ask me what Philippine cuisine is.

Besides adobo, lechon, inasal and balut, perhaps we can promote food products that use extensively agricultural crops unique to our country: our luscious "carabao" mango, ube or purple yam and pili nuts, for example. We have what I think is the best variety of lakatan banana for baked goods. Dalandan and calamansi can be used in local dishes as widely as the Thais use kaffir lime (which we now also grow in the Philippines).

Food preparation and food production go hand in hand. Promoting Philippine cuisine must be closely coordinated with the agriculture sector.

Officials from some countries renowned for their agriculture have told me that our farming methods are unscientific, which is a shame, they said, considering the richness of the soil across the archipelago.

The officials, who have visited farms in our country, noted the lack of research and development for crop varieties that are most suited to the land and climate in a particular area – varieties that give the best yield in terms not only of volume but also quality, including crop taste, appearance and smell.

Some large farms have these types of operations, with their owners sourcing seeds or mother seedlings from around the world for propagation or crossbreeding in the Philippines. They grow top-grade cacao, for example, and process pricey chocolate for both export and local consumption. The Philippines is gaining global renown for its premium chocolate, with the cacao grown mostly in Davao.

But why not make the top-grade crops widespread? The government can help ordinary farmers get access to high-quality seeds and seedlings, for example in the areas where coffee and cacao are grown.

Apart from crops, there's livestock. Lechoneros say native pigs make the best lechon. Native chicken is the tastiest for tinola.

Our native water buffalo or carabao produces what has to be one of the creamiest and most delectable milk in the world. The milk can be processed into high-grade mozzarella and burrata. Scientists in Nueva Ecija told me that the carabao does not produce the enormous quantities of milk like dairy buffalo breeds. Rather than give up relying on the carabao for milk, however, it can be bred to produce premium and therefore higher-priced milk and cheeses.

Last Wednesday I was ecstatic about the return to some grocery shelves in my neck of the woods of my favorite carabao milk brand, DVF – the initials of owner Danilo V. Fausto, president of the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. I don't think DVF uses native buffalo milk, but its carabao milk is still excellent.

\* \* \*

It's a relief to get a break from all the stories related to thousands of extrajudicial killings and one "extrajudicial rendition" (which do you think is worse)?

Between the Duterte Diehard Supporters and an elder sister who seems bent on sabotaging his governance and legacy building, BBM can de-stress through karaoke and cooking.

The dramatic events of the past two weeks involving the Dutertes have pulled national attention away from so many other urgent matters, from food to health, education and collapsing bridges.

BBM's veto of the culinary capital bill provides an opening for renewed discussions on food, whose supply is inadequate for millions of Filipinos, and whose prices have been fueling inflation since the start of the Marcos administration.

\* \* \*

Better than declaring any province as a culinary capital, we need more effort to promote Philippine cuisine to the world.

Other countries have been doing this, as part of national branding. China, Japan and India, drawing from their ancient cultures, are way ahead in this department.

Food trips are among the top tourist packages for Taiwan; the self-ruled island has managed to offer dishes that are distinct from those on the Chinese mainland. Pineapple pastries and bubble or boba pearl milk tea have become identified with Taiwan.

In Southeast Asia, the Thais and Vietnamese are ahead in national food branding. Even tiny Singapore has managed to promote a multicultural cuisine as its own, called Peranakan or Nyonya, although the cuisine is also widely available in neighboring Malaysia as well as in Indonesia.

Philippine cuisine has so much more to offer apart from lechon and all the permutations of adobo. But making the world aware of them requires more effort.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2025/03/24/2430717/national-food-branding>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Vietnam rice waste levels set as benchmark for PHL

March 24, 2025 | 12:02 am



PHILIPPINE STAR/MICHAEL VARCAS

By **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**, Reporter

POST-HARVEST RICE losses are expected to decline by at least nine percentage points following a P10-billion investment in upgrades to rice storage facilities, the Department of Agriculture said.

About 17% of the rice harvest is lost annually, against 8% for Vietnam, Agriculture Assistant Undersecretary Arnel V. de Mesa told *BusinessWorld*.

“Reaching Vietnam’s 8% benchmark — the difference would be 9 percentage points — would be a big achievement,” he said.

Fitch Solutions BMI said in a recent report that rice yields in the Philippines are lower than those in Vietnam but are very close to those in the largest exporter, India, and higher than those in Thailand.

BMI called it a “significant concern” that the Philippines is importing so much rice, and will account for 9.7% of global rice imports in 2024/25 based on US Department of Agriculture forecasts, given that 19.5% of the population had insufficient food consumption as of September 2024.

The National Food Authority (NFA) earlier this month said it is undertaking a P10-billion modernization program aimed at enhancing rice storage, building new rice mills, and upgrading drying facilities to improve the rice harvest recovery rate.

The program is funded through government allocations, with half of the budget granted late last year and the remaining P5 billion earmarked for rice mills, drying facilities, and other infrastructure projects included in the 2025 national budget.

The NFA said P1.5 billion will be allocated for repairing existing warehouses, while the remaining P3.5 billion will be used to add 800,000 metric tons of storage capacity by next year, doubling the NFA's current capacity of 1 million metric tons.

NFA procurement is hindered by variations in rice quality and age of the inventory.

The main problem with the current warehouse network is congestion, due to the inability to manage stocks, according to retired agriculture professor Roy S. Kempis, currently director of the Center for Business Innovation at Angeles University Foundation.

The congestion is worsened by inability to correctly time the release of stocks to ensure supply stability and minimal price disruption.

"In the meantime, decisions to bring in imports and the timing of such shipments are very tentative. They also affect the amount of rice that needs to be stored in the warehouses," he added.

Mr. Kempis noted that domestic production and supply varies by the season.

"In view of these problems, decision makers are faced the dilemma of what predictive formula to set up and follow," he said.

"Once there is congestion, the ambient temperature required to store rice becomes difficult to maintain," he added.

Mr. Kempis said as warehouse temperatures and humidity rise, the risk of contamination from fungi also rises.

Raul Q. Montemayor, national manager of the Federation of Free Farmers, said dry palay can last from six to eight months.

He noted that palay is usually milled into rice within four months to make room for the next harvest. Milled rice, meanwhile, can last up to three months.

Mr. Kempis said milled rice, which is packed in sacks and stored in air-ventilated warehouses, can be stored for maximum of two years, "provided there is no congestion inside the warehouses."

Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food, Inc. President Danilo V. Fausto said the NFA's modernization program will boost its ability to buy more palay from farmers at a better price.

"Palay will have a longer shelf life than rice since rice is at risk of spoilage after two months and/or weevil infestation," he said.

Rice growers are currently facing low farmgate prices as traders opt to deal in imported rice.

The farmgate price has fallen to as low as P15-16 per kilo for freshly harvested grain, according to industry reports earlier this month.

On March 18, Malacañang urged farmers to work with local government units in bringing their palay harvests to NFA buying stations to bypass traders, who often seek to influence prices.

The NFA's 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.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/03/24/661134/vietnam-rice-waste-levels-set-as-benchmark-for-phl/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Japan zero-tariff deals eroding PHL banana competitiveness

March 24, 2025 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

THE zero-tariff arrangements enjoyed by other banana suppliers to Japan are eroding the competitiveness of Philippine growers, whose rates were set in 2006, officials said.

The Philippines' banana tariff rates in Japan were set in a 2006 bilateral economic agreement at 18% between April and September, and 8% between October and March, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said in a statement on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Japan imposes zero or preferential tariffs on bananas from Cambodia, Laos, Mexico Vietnam, it noted.

“A major challenge for Philippine banana exporters is the high tariff under the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA), which was signed in 2006,” the DA said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. and a delegation of industry met with Japanese importers recently, part of a broader Philippine effort to lobby for tariff cuts.

Though the Philippines still holds the largest share of the Japanese market, supplying three out of every four bananas consumed, “this figure has declined from a peak of nine in every 10,” the DA said.

Mr. Laurel also met with Japan's State Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, Hirofumi Takinami, and Liberal Democratic Party Secretary-General Hiroshi Moriyama to discuss a potential review of JPEPA “in light of shifting global economic conditions.”

Citing the Japan Banana Importers Association, the DA said Philippine bananas enjoy a freshness and taste advantage.

The DA said the Philippines is optimistic about ongoing trade negotiations between the two countries, which promise more advantageous market access for Philippine banana exports.

Philippine banana exports declined 2.97% to 2.28 million metric tons in 2024, with the industry losing its position as the third-leading banana exporter.

Mr. Laurel said the government will continue to support banana growers battling Fusarium wilt, a soil-borne fungal disease that has significantly affected production. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/03/24/661135/japan-zero-tariff-deals-eroding-phl-banana-competitiveness/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Bytes and Bites: How AI and agriculture can shape a sustainable future

March 24, 2025 | 12:30 am

**ACG**

## HOW AI IS TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURE WORLDWIDE

**AI'S ROLE IN AGRICULTURE:**

- Predicts pests & diseases** (Icon: bug)
- Enhances productivity & efficiency** (Icon: speedometer)
- Optimizes farm management** (Icon: gear with plant)

**GLOBAL AI INNOVATIONS IN AGRICULTURE:**

- Nigeria:** AI-powered chatbot for farm management (Icon: Nigerian flag)
- Kenya:** AI solar-powered device for pest detection (Icon: Kenyan flag)
- Philippines:** AI projects for food security & smart farming (Icon: Philippine flag)

ASIAN CONSULTING GROUP | LET ACG FIX YOUR TAXES FOR GOOD!

By Mon Abrea

In this modern world of ubiquitous apps and voice-controlled robots, the future and past collide. The avant-garde processes and programs perfected by technology fuel the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), while agriculture — rooted in tradition and necessity — remains a cornerstone of human survival. Despite their differences, both industries offer immense opportunities for growth, innovation, and sustainability.

AI's contributions to health, transportation, manufacturing, food and farming, education, and public services are undeniable. From diagnosing diseases and optimizing supply chains to personalizing education and automating administrative tasks, AI simplifies life through apps, automation, and chatbots. However, challenges around labor displacement, skill requirements, and environmental impacts must be managed through thoughtful regulation and strategic tax incentives.

Meanwhile, agriculture is experiencing a global shift from animal-based to plant-based production, driven by health, environmental, and ethical considerations. Innovations like plant-based meat alternatives are gaining traction, ensuring a stable food supply while reducing the environmental footprint of traditional livestock farming. Governments worldwide play a critical role in safeguarding food security, especially in times of crisis.

### **The Philippines: Tapping into AI and Agriculture for Food Security**

As an agriculture-dependent nation, the Philippines has significant potential to integrate AI into its agricultural sector. The intersection of AI and agriculture presents a vital opportunity to address pressing challenges, particularly food security.

AI is revolutionizing agriculture globally, offering solutions to enhance farming methods, improve productivity, and bolster food systems. In Africa, for example, AI is transforming traditional farming practices.

- **Nigeria: Farmers use an AI-powered chatbot that offers real-time farm management advice, predicts loan repayment capabilities, forecasts input demands, and optimizes pricing strategies. This tool helps farmers make informed decisions, improving their productivity and profitability.**
- **Kenya: The introduction of the world's first solar-powered device with AI capabilities helps detect and predict crop pests and diseases. This innovation not only provides early warnings but also offers carbon-neutral, affordable solutions to agricultural challenges, promoting sustainable and resilient farming.**

In the Philippines, adopting AI in agriculture could similarly enhance productivity and resilience. However, high implementation costs remain a barrier, particularly for small-scale farmers. While the government has ambitious plans to digitize agriculture through technologies like automated irrigation systems, much of this vision has yet to be realized.

### **Public-Private Partnerships: A Path to Progress**

To accelerate AI adoption in agriculture, public-private partnerships are crucial. Combining government initiatives with private sector expertise and funding can generate the resources needed to modernize the sector. Such collaborations could democratize access to advanced technologies, enabling Filipino farmers to increase yields and improve their livelihoods.

Recently, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) allocated P100 million for four agri-tech projects aimed at boosting productivity and ensuring food security. One project leverages AI for impact-based forecasting to support rice-based farming communities — a critical step in optimizing agricultural practices.

The Department of Science and Technology-Advanced Science and Technology Institute (DoST-ASTI) also launched the Gul.AI Project, merging information and communications technology with agriculture. The project uses plant boxes equipped with sensors to collect data on water pH, humidity, temperature, light, and live imaging — providing farmers with valuable insights for crop management.

The government's *Philippine Development Report 2023* underscores its commitment to digital transformation in agriculture. The Republic Act No. 11981 or Tatak Pinoy (Proudly Pinoy) Act led to the launch of two pivotal initiatives:

1. **National AI Strategy Roadmap 2.0 (NAISR): Aims to integrate AI across sectors, including agriculture, to drive economic growth and improve quality of life;**
2. **Center for AI Research (CAIR): Focuses on using AI to address industrial challenges, boost innovation, and support sustainable development.**

These initiatives are laying the groundwork for the country's digital future. However, sustained collaboration among agencies like NEDA, DoST, and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is essential to scale these efforts.

## The Role of Global Carbon Tax in Driving Sustainability

A Global Carbon Tax could significantly influence sustainability initiatives in agriculture. By imposing taxes on carbon emissions, this mechanism encourages industries — including agriculture — to adopt greener practices. In the context of AI and agriculture:

- **Incentivizing Green Tech:** Businesses that implement AI solutions to reduce carbon footprints could benefit from tax incentives, promoting widespread adoption.
- **Funding for Innovation:** Revenues from the carbon tax could fund research and development of AI tools tailored for sustainable agriculture.
- **Supporting Farmers:** Subsidies or grants could help farmers transition to eco-friendly technologies, bridging the gap between traditional practices and modern innovations.

For the Philippines, a carbon tax framework aligned with global standards could support national climate goals and enhance food security. Through AI integration and a robust tax policy, the country could lead by example in creating a resilient agricultural system that addresses both economic and environmental challenges.



### A Sustainable Future Within Reach

AI's transformative power, coupled with effective tax policies like the Global Carbon Tax, can build a sustainable and resilient agricultural ecosystem. Small, deliberate actions today — such as fostering collaborations, investing in technology, and enacting climate-smart policies — can yield significant rewards for future generations.

With a clear vision, collaborative spirit, and unwavering commitment to sustainability, the Philippines can turn its agricultural potential into a robust foundation for national growth and global leadership in climate action.

### A Call to Action: 2025 International Tax and Investment Conference

The conversation around AI, agriculture, and sustainability will continue at the 2025 International Tax and Investment Conference (ITIC) on March 26 at the Manila Marriott. This year's conference will bring together global thought leaders, policymakers, industry experts, and innovators to promote ESG investing in the Philippines.

I look forward to sharing insights, learning from thought leaders and game-changers, and inspiring change — one byte and bite at a time. REGISTER HERE: <https://itic2025.helixpay.ph/>.

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<https://www.bworldonline.com/spotlight/2025/03/24/660571/bytes-and-bites-how-ai-and-agriculture-can-shape-a-sustainable-future/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Villgro Philippines, SEARCA launch accelerator program for agri innovation

March 24, 2025 | 12:26 am



Villgro Philippines, a gender-smart incubator supporting impact-driven enterprises, has partnered with the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) to jointly run the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Enhancement (SAFE) Accelerator.

This virtual accelerator program is designed to support high-potential enterprises developing regenerative, climate-resilient solutions that address food security and sustainable agriculture challenges in Southeast Asia.

With agriculture serving as a backbone for millions across the region, the sector faces escalating threats from climate change, extreme weather events, unsustainable farming practices, and food waste. The SAFE Accelerator aims to cultivate market-driven, climate-resilient solutions that protect biodiversity, sustain farming communities, and improve food security.

“SEARCA, with its deep expertise in advancing climate-smart agriculture and agritech innovations, sees the SAFE Accelerator as a key initiative in fostering sustainable development across the region,” Dr. Glenn Gregorio, SEARCA Center director, said.

He added that the program will support four enterprises in Lao PDR, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam that integrate regenerative, nature-based solutions in their business models.

“The need of the hour is urgent transformative change to ensure food security — regenerative agriculture is at the heart of restoring ecosystems and ensuring our food systems are sustainable. The SAFE Accelerator will equip enterprises driving climate-friendly agribusinesses with coaching, tools, and networks to scale regenerative solutions that sustain both people and the planet,” Priya Thachadi, co-founder and CEO of Villgro Philippines, said.

The four-month virtual accelerator program offers tailored capacity-building, mentorship from industry experts, hands-on workshops, gender-smart training, and self-paced investment readiness training. The program will conclude with an Impact Showcase, where selected enterprises will connect with potential investors and partners. Additionally, eligible enterprises may receive further funding opportunities through Villgro Philippines’ investor network.

“The SAFE Accelerator is an important step for empowering enterprises at the forefront of climate-smart agriculture, enabling them to scale solutions and the kind of innovations needed to reshape agriculture in

Southeast Asia — driving both ecological restoration and long-term food security,” Atty. Eric Reynoso, SEARCA program head for Emerging Innovation for Growth, said.

Applications will open in April 2025 for screening and joint evaluation by Villgro Philippines and SEARCA. Interested enterprises or partner organizations in Lao PDR, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam may reach out to the team at [climate@villgrophilippines.org](mailto:climate@villgrophilippines.org).

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*SparkUp is BusinessWorld’s multimedia brand created to inform, inspire, and empower the Philippine startups; micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); and future business leaders. This section will be published every other Monday. For pitches and releases about startups, e-mail to [bmbeltran@bworldonline.com](mailto:bmbeltran@bworldonline.com) (cc: [abconoza@bworldonline.com](mailto:abconoza@bworldonline.com)). Materials sent become BW property.*

<https://www.bworldonline.com/sparkup/2025/03/24/660967/villgro-philippines-searca-launch-accelerator-program-for-agri-innovation/>

**MANILA STANDARD:**

## DA seeks lower Japan tariff on PH bananas



*Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. (Courtesy: Department of Agriculture)*

By Othel V. Campos

March 23, 2025, 9:00 pm

Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr., along with a high-level delegation and representatives from the Philippine banana industry, pushed for lower tariffs on Philippine bananas bound for Japan.

Tiu Laurel stressed in a recent visit to Japan, the importance of the agriculture commodity to thousands of Filipino farmers and workers, especially in Mindanao.

“To sustain and expand this industry, we must push for tariff reductions. Lower tariffs will encourage greater investment in banana production, driving poverty alleviation, job creation, and economic security in Mindanao,” he said.

The Philippines remains Japan’s top banana supplier, providing three out of every four bananas consumed. This share, however, has declined from a peak of nine in 10.

The Japan Banana Importers Association (JBIA) attributes Japanese consumers’ preference for Philippine bananas to their superior freshness and taste.

The forum with Japanese banana importers, attended by the Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA), focused on quality standards, tariff concerns and industry growth strategies.

Japan imposes a seasonal tariff of 18 percent on Philippine bananas from April to September and 8 percent from October to March on over 1 million metric tons of bananas annually.

Bananas from Cambodia, Laos, Mexico and Vietnam enjoy zero or preferential tariffs.

As Japan is the largest market for Philippine bananas, the industry generates over \$1 billion in annual sales and supports more than 700,000 Filipinos.

The Philippines delegation also met with Japan’s State Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Hirofumi Takinami and Liberal Democratic Party Secretary-General Hiroshi Moriyama to discuss a potential review of the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) in light of shifting global economic conditions.

“This trip aims to address the declining competitiveness of Philippine bananas in Japan. We seek to find a common solution with stakeholders to resolve the tariff issue and negotiate mutually beneficial terms with the Japanese government under JPEPA,” said Tiu Laurel.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314571792/da-seeks-lower-japan-tariff-on-ph-bananas.html>

**MANILA STANDARD:**

# **Kadiwa supports small farmers, fisherfolk of Dinagat Islands**

By PNA

March 23, 2025, 10:20 pm

BUTUAN CITY — The provincial government of Dinagat Islands launched the “Kadiwa ng Pangulo: Tabo sa Kapitolyo” on Friday to support micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), farmers and fisherfolk organizations.

Governor Nilo Demerey Jr. said the open market, located at the capitol grounds, aims to expand market access for local producers and increase their profits.

“The open market will help MSMEs, farmers, and fisherfolk promote their products and gain higher profit margins by cutting out intermediaries,” Demerey said in a statement.

The market, open every Thursday, offers fresh and affordable farm products, including vegetables, fruits, root crops, rice, fish, marine products, processed goods, and handicrafts.

Demerey credited the Provincial Agriculture Office for making the Kadiwa project a reality.

He said the initiative strengthens community connections and fosters partnerships between local producers and buyers from across the province.

“The weekly market activities will allow MSMEs to meet potential business partners, suppliers, or collaborators, opening doors for future growth,” Demerey added.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/314571834/kadiwa-supports-small-farmers-fisherfolk-of-dinagat-islands.html>

**MANILA STANDARD:**

# **Binay calls for stricter land use policies to balance food security, urban growth**

By Manila Standard

March 23, 2025, 3:37 pm

Senatorial candidate and Makati City Mayor Abby Binay over the weekend called on local government units (LGUs) to strictly enforce their Comprehensive Land Use Plans (CLUPs) to safeguard food security while managing rapid urbanization.

Speaking at a press conference of Alyansa Para sa Bagong Pilipinas in Santa Rosa, Laguna on Saturday, Binay emphasized that effective implementation of CLUPs is essential in ensuring that urban projects, particularly housing developments, do not compromise agricultural stability.

“Coming from the perspective of a mayor, what we really need is the strict implementation of the comprehensive land use plan,” Binay said. She explained that CLUPs, which are valid for 10 years, are based on intensive studies of a locality’s conditions and needs.

However, Binay pointed out that while the plans are well-structured, their implementation often falls short. She explained that adherence to CLUPs is key to achieving balanced and sustainable development.

“If we veer away from the CLUP, what’s the point? And the CLUP is supposed to be your bible to ensure food security and balanced urbanization,” Binay added.

As a mayor, Binay said she has firsthand experience in addressing the challenges LGUs face in balancing development and food security.

The aspiring senator has been a strong advocate of evidence-based policymaking and governance reforms to ensure that urban planning remains sustainable and responsive to communities.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/elections-2025/314571594/binay-calls-for-stricter-land-use-policies-to-balance-food-security-urban-growth.html>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# **DA triples rice purchase limit for P29 beneficiaries**

**By Giselle P. Jordan**

**March 24, 2025**

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is tripling the monthly rice purchase limit — to 30 kilograms (kg) from 10 — for beneficiaries of its Program 29 (P29) initiative.

The program, launched in July 2024, aims to offer high-quality rice at P29/kg to 6.9 million vulnerable households or 35 million Filipinos including senior citizens, persons with disabilities (PWDs), solo parents and indigents.

The rice, to be sourced from the National Food Authority's (NFA) buffer stocks, was made available through Kadiwa ng Pangulo centers and stores.

At the Trabaho at Serbisyong Pangkalusugan event on Friday, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. encouraged beneficiaries to avail of the new rice purchase limit, which took effect nationwide immediately.

The DA, citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), said an average Filipino consumer who has P100 spends about P9 on rice. The amount doubles to P18 per P100 among low-income families.

Aside from the P29 program, the government is also implementing the Rice-for-All (RFA) program, under which rice is sold at P43/kg for 5-percent broken; P35/kg for 25-percent broken; and P33/kg for 100-percent broken.

Broken rice consists of fragments of the grain that were broken during drying, transport, or milling. It is, like brown rice, as nutritious as unbroken rice if the germ and bran are intact.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/24/business/top-business/da-triples-rice-purchase-limit-for-p29-beneficiaries/2078311>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# 'Govt should also protect agricultural land'

**By Bernadette E. Tamayo**

**March 24, 2025**

SEN. Francis Tolentino said government support for the promotion of Filipino-made products should include the protection of agricultural land that are vital to domestic industries.

The senator made the remark when asked how the government could address the continuing conversion of coconut farmlands in Laguna into subdivisions and commercial establishments.

"There must be a way to link the 'One Town, One Product' law that we just passed to fill in policy gaps due to the absence of a National Land Use Plan," Tolentino said on Sunday.

He was referring to Republic Act (RA) 11981, or the 'Tatak Pinoy' (Proudly Filipino) Law, which was signed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. into law in 2024.

The senator said he would study the law's implementing rules to see how the government could halt the unwarranted conversion of agricultural land, not just in Laguna, but also in other provinces.

"We can regulate the issuance of permits and clearances. You can't be allowed to just wipe out coconut plantations," Tolentino said.

"As a child, I remember that San Pablo City used to have Franklin Baker," he recalled referring to the company renowned for producing desiccated coconut and supplying coconut ingredients to major confectioneries around the world.

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In addition, Laguna is known for producing coconut based delicacies, most notably the iconic buko pie. Tolentino said that the same approach can be used to protect lanzones farms in Alaminos and palay fields in towns such as Victoria and Pila from unwarranted land-use conversion.

The senator said that he backs the passage of the National Land Use Plan Act, which has languished in the legislative mill for over a decade.

"I support the call to revive the National Land Use Plan Act which has long been pending, as former Senate president Vicente Sotto III said, since the 15th Congress," he said.

The measure seeks the sustainable use and allocation of the country's land resources.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/24/news/national/govt-should-also-protect-agricultural-land/2078349>



**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# **Illegal fishing in Eastern Visayas rampant — BFAR**

**By Nestor Abrematea**  
**March 24, 2025**

TACLOBAN CITY — An official of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Office here has revealed the continued rampant illegal fishing activities in the seas of Region 8 (Eastern Visayas).

Speaking at the weekly forum Talakayan sa Budget Hotel of the Eastern Visayas Media Without Borders at Tacloban Budget Hotel in Sagkahan District on Saturday, March 22, Edmar Kristopher Petallana, BFAR-8 Enforcement and Regional Control and Surveillance Office chief, said the rampant illegal fishing is a big challenge they face. Petallana said the rampant illegal fishing activities are at the Samar seas and the Leyte Gulf being the rich fishing grounds of Eastern Visayas.

"Generally there is still big problem of illegal fishing in our major fishing grounds. These are at the Samar seas and the Leyte Gulf made by big commercial fishing vessels," revealed Petallana.

"The problem we face is our budget for enforcement had been cut for the past two years by the national government. Majority of the commercial fishers are doing their illegal fishing there," added Petallana.

Petallana said a major problem they face are the commercial fishing in the municipal waters of Leyte and Samar as they are prohibited to conduct fishing from within 15 meters of the municipal waters.

He called on the local government units to intensify their campaign against illegal fishing in their area of jurisdiction.

Petallana added that based on their data since February 2025, they have filed 303 administrative cases and other criminal cases and assisted the Philippine Maritime Police and local government units in prosecuting illegal fishers apprehended by them.

He, however, failed to provide data on the rate of conviction or names involved.

Eastern Visayas are composed of the provinces of Leyte, Southern Leyte, Eastern Samar, Biliran and Samar. The BFAR-8 also reported that the red tide problem in the bays of Eastern Visayas will continue to exist and a big challenge to them as it could no longer solve the bays of Leyte and Samar because the toxins are already there.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/24/regions/illegal-fishing-in-eastern-visayas-rampant-bfar/2078344>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **PHL growers urge Japan to cut banana tariffs next year**

Ada Pelonia

March 24, 2025

Local banana growers and exporters are pushing for 13-percentage point cut in the tariffs imposed by Japan on Philippine bananas by next year.

The Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA) is also calling for a uniform tariff scheme for Philippine bananas in Japan, veering away from the current two-tiered duties levied on one of the country's leading export crops.

PBGEA Executive Director Stephen Antig said this would put the Philippines on a "level playing field" with other banana exporters such as Vietnam, which will ship bananas to Japan at zero tariffs by 2028.

"By 2028, tariff on banana from Vietnam will go down to zero. Vietnam is our biggest competitor right now from Southeast Asia," Antig told the BusinessMirror.

"What we're asking is to reduce the 26-percent tariff by 13 [percentage points] next year, then another 13 [percentage points] by 2027 so that the tariff on banana is zero by 2028," he added.

Currently, Philippine bananas in Japan are slapped a tariff of 8 percent during summer and 18 percent during winter. Antig said this scheme should also be tweaked as a uniform tariff will make it "faster and easier" to impose the proposed change in the tariff structure.

"Breaking down tariffs during winter and summer would make [the implementation of the proposed changes] more complicated," he said.

The group has been lobbying for cuts in tariffs for Philippine bananas exported to Japan, where it is now seeing its market shrink due to the entry of other competitors from Asia.

"Production woes in the Philippines affected the steady quantities demanded by the market thus prompting other suppliers to fill the gap created," PBGEA said.

"With lower or zero tariffs imposed on other suppliers, Philippine bananas will continue to lose its competitiveness," it added.

PBGEA said Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. is finding "non-traditional but innovative avenues" in pursuing the tariff concern with the support of the Philippine Embassy in Tokyo.

Revitalization program

Meanwhile, Antig said the PBGEA and the Department of Agriculture (DA) are crafting a program for the revitalization of the banana industry. They are working on a bill akin to the salt industry development plan, he added.

He said part of the program is constructing a research facility that would cater not only to banana growers but also to planters of various high-value crops.

"Once it is established, other commodities like durian, pineapple, and mango will also benefit because growers of these fruits may avail of the services of the research facility," he said.

The facility will be particularly critical for smallhold farmers, which account for about 40 percent of the country's banana growers.

"We need the research facility to be able to develop varieties that are resistant to various pests and diseases," he said.

The DA chief earlier noted that the spread of Banana Fusarium Wilt Tropical Race 4 (TR4) disease and black sigatoka caused local smallholder farms, pegged at 90,000 hectares, to shrink by 50 percent. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/02/03/fungal-diseases-cripple-small-banana-farms/>).

Antig noted that the bill would formalize the program if enacted into law, which will mandate the allocation of funds for revitalization efforts.

"Farmers don't have the funds to put up a research facility on their own and then run it," he said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/24/phl-growers-urge-japan-to-cut-banana-tariffs-next-year/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **DA: Cheap rice program beneficiaries may buy 30 kilos**

Ada Pelonia

March 24, 2025

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has increased the monthly allocation for the beneficiaries of its cheaper rice program to 30 kilos.

The DA said vulnerable sectors under its program could now purchase up to 30 kilos of rice every month from the previous allocation of 10 kilos.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the new policy would be implemented nationwide immediately. The P29 rice is sold at Kadiwa stores and centers.

“We urge you to take advantage of this new policy, which responds to the calls from our financially-challenged fellow citizens for greater access to more affordable food, especially rice,” Laurel said in a statement.

The DA said vulnerable sectors, such as senior citizens, persons with disabilities (PWDs), solo parents, and indigents, account for several million Filipinos covered by the government’s P29 program.

It added that rice supplies sold under this initiative are sourced from the National Food Authority’s (NFA) buffer stocks.

The DA launched the P29 program in July 2024 as part of efforts to provide affordable rice options for vulnerable sectors.

Furthermore, the agency widened Filipinos’ rice options by implementing its Rice-for-All (RFA) program, which allows consumers to purchase rice at reduced prices.

Currently, prices under the RFA stand at P43 per kilo for rice with 5 percent broken grains, P35 per kilo for rice with 25 percent broken grains, and P33 per kilo for 100 percent broken grains.

More Kadiwa stores

Meanwhile, the DA and the National Housing Authority (NHA) recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that would establish Kadiwa stores across NHA projects.

The DA will assist in identifying and establishing Kadiwa stores or centers at NHA-designated locations and will provide logistical and technical support to ensure the program’s implementation.

“This memorandum of understanding between the Department of Agriculture and the NHA represents a crucial step in integrating food security into housing communities,” Laurel said.

“Providing homes is essential, but true community development goes beyond shelter. It must also include sustainable food systems, livelihood opportunities, and economic stability.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/24/da-cheap-rice-program-beneficiaries-may-buy-30-kilos/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# Nations must improve response to bird flu outbreaks—FAO

BusinessMirror  
March 24, 2025

Countries must enhance surveillance and reporting and strengthen outbreak response to address the global spread of avian influenza or bird flu, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Apart from these measures, FAO also called on countries to improve laboratory capacity, foster regional and international cooperation and develop and implement preparedness plans and plan for business continuity.

The UN agency urged nations to consider vaccination to mitigate risk and promote risk management through biosecurity.

In a briefing by the FAO to member countries last week, it noted that the spread of H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza has resulted in the loss of hundreds of millions of poultry worldwide with increased spillover into mammals.

The UN agency said this highlights the urgent need for strengthened biosecurity, monitoring and surveillance, rapid-response mechanisms, and risk communication to safeguard the poultry sector and protect livelihoods and economies.

FAO Deputy Director-General Godfrey Magwenzi described the spread of the disease as unprecedented, “leading to serious impacts on food security and food supply in countries, including loss of valuable nutrition, rural jobs and income, shocks to local economies, and of course increasing costs to consumers.”

Among the complex challenges avian influenza poses are how to protect poultry production systems to ensure food security and the nutrition of the millions who rely on poultry for meat and eggs. Additional challenges revolve around safeguarding biodiversity, livelihoods and safe trade, and preventing social impacts, most often borne by poultry farmers, Magwenzi said.

FAO Deputy Director-General Beth Bechdol said bird flu is a transboundary issue requiring a global, coordinated response.

“FAO has been on the front lines of tackling this virus for over 20 years—supporting governments in detecting, preventing, and responding to outbreaks.”

To strengthen these efforts, FAO and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) have launched a 10-year Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza.

Bechdol highlighted FAO’s role in combating avian influenza and other potential pandemic threats, underscoring the importance of strong veterinary and animal health system capacity in every country.

“A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. By working together, we can reduce the impact of avian influenza and protect both animal and human health—locally and globally.”

The last four years have seen a major shift in avian influenza in terms of geographical spread, with increased spillover to mammals and massive losses in domestic birds, impacting food security and driving up prices for poultry products, FAO told its members.

Large numbers of wild birds have succumbed to the disease, harming biodiversity with at least 300 newly affected wild bird species since 2021.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/24/nations-must-improve-response-to-bird-flu-outbreaks-fao/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# US sounds out Italy egg producers amid shortages in Easter runup

Bloomberg News  
March 23, 2025



A partial days worth of eggs collected from ISA Brown chickens at an egg farm in Mason, Michigan, US, on Monday, March 3, 2025. Egg prices have soared to a record of over \$8 a dozen, driven by the worst-ever outbreak of avian flu in the US and contributing to broader inflation pressures.

UNITED STATES officials have asked Italian producers if they can help secure egg supplies amid shortages and upcoming holidays, including Easter and Passover.

Gian Luca Bagnara, head of the Assoavi Italian association of egg producers, said he was surprised to hear in recent days from a US embassy representative, who asked how many eggs Italian farmers could ship to the US in the next six months.

“I thought I was on Candid Camera,” Bagnara told Bloomberg News on Friday. Once he was assured the call was real, the tone changed.

“I felt really proud and started making inquiries. This could be an opportunity for building new international relations and we are eager to help,” Bagnara said. But the headroom for exports is very limited, he admitted, as only about 10 percent of Italian production is sold abroad.

With about 13 billion eggs a year, Italy is Europe’s fourth biggest producer, according to Unaitalia, a local association of meat and egg producers. Roughly a quarter of production comes from the northern Veneto region, according to daily Corriere della Sera, which first reported the contact between the US and the Italian association Assoavi.

The request comes as the US has experienced its worst-ever bird flu outbreak, which has killed millions of hens and sent retail prices skyrocketing. US President Donald Trump said on his Truth Social platform on Thursday that egg prices are now “WAY DOWN from the Biden-inspired prices of just a few weeks ago.” Industry groups in countries from Poland to Indonesia have reported inquiries from US embassies and the US Department of Agriculture about eggs for export.

Canola tariffs

China’s tariffs on canola are the “most immediate threat” to western Canada’s economy, Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe said, even as the US threatens to raise import taxes against a wide range of Canadian goods.

China announced a 100 percent tariff on rapeseed oil and meal from Canada, where the crop is known as canola, along with a smaller duty on pork and seafood earlier this month in response to Canadian tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles, steel and aluminum.

The Canada-China spat is happening at the same time as US President Donald Trump is preparing to broaden a global trade war with a plan to bring in so-called “reciprocal tariffs” on April 2. He has already imposed tariffs on billions of dollars of goods from Canada and Mexico, the two countries with whom he signed a trade agreement during his first term as president.

Moe urged Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to contact the Chinese government and “at least commit to finding a path, a path to removing these tariffs should he win the next election.”

Saskatchewan has about 60 percent of Canada’s canola refining capacity and employs 55,000 people in the province, according to an industry group in the province of more than 1.2 million.

Moe, who has made repeated trips to the US in recent months as part of Canada’s efforts to try to avert tariffs, said he’s “confident” the US and Canada will find a resolution. “It won’t be without some choppy water, but I am confident that we’ll find a path through because of what it means to each of us, as North Americans, in adding value to these products,” he said in Calgary.

Carney was sworn in as prime minister a week ago and is on the verge of calling an election. Currently, polls suggest it’s a tight race between his Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, led by Pierre Poilievre. After the election, the “window is going to open to some degree” for Canada’s oil and gas industry to get new projects approved after years of tighter environmental measures by Justin Trudeau’s government, Moe said.

Image credits: [Emily Elconin/Bloomberg](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/23/us-sounds-out-italy-egg-producers-amid-shortages-in-easter-runup/>

**MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT:**

# DA in talks with Japan on banana tariff adjustments

By *Jed Macapagal*  
March 24

The agency said in a statement on Sunday the talks started when a DA delegation led by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and the Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association met with counterparts in Japan earlier this month.

The DA said the Philippines is negotiating for a better tariff agreement with Japan, given that Philippine banana exporters have been paying tariffs for such exports while Cambodia, Laos, Mexico and Vietnam either enjoy preferential tariffs or pay none at all.



## ***TIU LAUREL***

Philippine banana exporters paid an 18 percent tariff from April to September in 2024 and an 8 percent tariff from October 2024 to March 2025 in Japan.

The agency urged Japan to review its tariffs on Philippine bananas and consider that bananas are a staple for Japanese consumers who get about 75 percent of their annual consumption or yearly demand of 1 million metric tons from the Philippines. This means that out of every four bananas consumed in Japan, three came from the Philippines, making the Filipino growers its biggest banana suppliers, the DA said.

That Philippine market share has even declined from the previous ratio of 9 out of 10 bananas consumed in Japan, or 90 percent of the yearly Japanese demand.

“The banana industry is a lifeline for thousands of (Filipino) farmers and workers, especially in Mindanao, where it serves as a major economic pillar... To sustain and expand this industry, we must push for tariff reductions on our bananas. This will not only attract greater investment in banana production but also drive poverty alleviation, job creation and security in Mindanao,” Tiu Laurel explained.

The DA said current tariff rates imposed by Japan for bananas from the Philippines have been set in accordance with the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) signed in 2006.

The DA said Tiu Laurel met with Hirofumi Takinami, Japan's State Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and Liberal Democratic Party Secretary-General Hiroshi Moriyama to discuss a potential review of the JPEPA, "in light of shifting global economic conditions."

"We hope to come up with a common solution with stakeholders to address the tariff issue and negotiate mutually beneficial terms with the Japanese government under the JPEPA," Tiu Laurel added.

DA emphasized the importance of bananas as a vital export commodity for Mindanao, generating over \$1 billion in annual sales and providing livelihoods to more than 700,000 Filipinos.

The DA also assured continued support for banana growers suffering from the fusarium wilt tropical race 4 disease in the soil.

The banana plant disease, more commonly known as the Panama disease, is caused by the soil-borne fungus fusarium oxysporum that enters the banana plant's roots and colonizes the xylem vessels, blocking the flow of water and nutrients, which can cause the wilting and death of the crop.

Based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, the country produced a total of 8.7 million metric tons of bananas in 2024, 3.5 percent less than 9.02 million MT in 2023.

Meanwhile, 4.48 million MT or 51.5 percent of the total banana production for 2024 was of the Cavendish variety, which is the main type of the fruit being exported to other countries.

<https://malaya.com.ph/business/business-news/da-in-talks-with-japan-on-banana-tariff-adjustments/>



## MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT:

# Vulnerable sectors can now buy up to 30 kg of rice monthly at P29/kilo

By *Jed Macapagal*  
March 24, 2025



*Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel and DA regional field officials manning a Kadiwa stall are shown during the Trabaho at Serbisyong Pangkalusugan sa Bagong Pilipinas event in Dasmariñas, Cavite on March 21, 2025.*

Senior citizens, persons with disabilities, solo parents and indigents may now buy up to 30 kilograms of rice per month for P29 a kilo under the subsidized rice program of the Department of Agriculture's National Food Authority (DA NFA), the agency announced in a statement on Sunday.

The DA has in effect tripled the monthly rice allocation for vulnerable sectors in its subsidized program, from 10 kg to 30 kg each.

It has reiterated that the vulnerable sectors who can avail of subsidized rice from the NFA's buffer stocks are senior citizens, persons with disabilities, solo parents and indigents.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. announced the "immediate" implementation of the new policy nationwide in Kadiwa rolling stores and centers found in markets and selected train stations.

"We urge you to take advantage of this new policy, which responds to the calls from our financially-challenged fellow citizens for greater access to more affordable food, especially rice," the DA secretary said in the statement. The agency deems the expanded rice benefit for vulnerable sectors as "crucial" in helping low-income Filipinos get through the day, considering that rice accounts for roughly P9 to P18 of every P100 spent by a Filipino consumer daily, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed.

The DA first launched the P29 program in July 2024 to provide affordable rice to vulnerable sectors.

Since then, the agency has further widened local rice options with the introduction of the Rice-for-All (RFA) program, which allows all consumers to buy unlimited amounts of rice at reduced prices at Kadiwa rolling stores. Current rice prices under the RFA are at P43 per kg for rice with 5 percent broken grains, P35 per kg for rice with 25 percent broken grains, and P33 per kg for 100 percent broken grains.

Meanwhile, based on the DA's monitoring of public markets in the National Capital Region, local well-milled rice sold for P40 to P53 per kg on Thursday, while regular milled rice went for P33 to P48 per kg.

Imported well-milled rice was selling for P44 to P46 per kg while the price of imported regular milled rice ranged from P33 to P45 per kg.

Special-variety imported rice fetched P50 to P60 a kilo and premium rice, P48 to P51.

Special variety local rice was selling for P53 to P64 per kg while premium rice went for P45 to P60 per kg.

<https://malaya.com.ph/business/corporate/vulnerable-sectors-can-now-buy-up-to-30-kg-of-rice-monthly-at-p29-kilo/>