

CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY MARCH 26, 2025

A. MANILA BULLETIN:

DA asks NBI to investigate reports of farmer distress in Nueva Ecija due to palay prices

DA must ensure MSRP compliance on pork, says solon

Israeli investments eye Philippine growth amid regional tensions

MVP-led Metro Pacific enters vegetable market with 'More Veggies Please'

B. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

MPIC agri unit aims to improve local milk, vegetable production

DOST seeks to revive salt industry in Misamis Oriental

C. BUSINESS WORLD:

MPIC unit opens 3.5-hectare Bulacan greenhouse complex

Israeli firms working on at least two PHL agricultural projects

D. MANILA STANDARD:

DA seeks NBI assistance on farmer's suicide online claims

Boosting agriculture

E. THE MANILA TIMES:

NBI asked to probe alleged farmer suicides

Rehab of mango trees ongoing in Zambales

F. BUSINESS MIRROR:

NFA must buy 20% of local rice to influence prices—DA

NFA set to rent warehouses to store more local palay

DTI, DA trade mission secures \$27.28M in sales, boosts ME economic ties

DA ties up with Japan to improve E. Visayas banana production

DTI boosts Sultan Kudarat coffee farmers with new machinery, skills under RAPID Growth

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA asks NBI to investigate reports of farmer distress in Nueva Ecija due to palay prices

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Mar 25, 2025 12:05 PM



The Department of Agriculture (DA) has requested the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to investigate social media claims regarding farmer hardships, reportedly linked to low palay (unmilled rice) prices.

In a letter to the NBI, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel called for a thorough investigation amid discrepancies with official reports.

Social media posts last week raised concerns about unfortunate events affecting three farmers in Nueva Ecija, with low palay buying prices cited as a potential factor.

Laurel expressed concern about the interpretation of these incidents by certain groups, stating that these claims differ from official law enforcement accounts and the DA's own findings.

He urged the public to show sensitivity and respect towards the affected families, emphasizing the need for privacy during this difficult time.

Reports indicated that farmgate rice prices in Nueva Ecija have fallen to ₱14 per kilo, despite the National Food Authority's (NFA) purchasing price of ₱18 per kilo for fresh harvests and ₱24 per kilo for clean, dry grains.

Laurel attributed the low prices to the NFA's limited budget, which restricted its ability to purchase larger quantities of rice, and the removal of its regulatory powers, which hinders effective market intervention.

“With its limited authority, the NFA cannot intervene in the market effectively, leaving traders room to suppress palay prices,” Laurel explained.

He reiterated his appeal to lawmakers to pass legislation that would empower the DA to address these challenges.

He emphasized the need to restore the NFA's powers, including direct rice sales to the public, and to allocate additional resources for palay purchases to influence market prices.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/25/nbi-asked-to-probe-alleged-farmers-suicide-due-to-low-palay-prices>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA must ensure MSRP compliance on pork, says solon

BY [ELLSON QUISMORIO](#)

Mar 25, 2025 09:31 AM

AT A GLANCE

- The Department of Agriculture (DA) must step up its campaign on ensuring that sellers and suppliers comply with the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for pork, AGRI Party-list Rep. Wilbert T. Lee said.



(MANILA BULLETIN)

The Department of Agriculture (DA) must step up its campaign on ensuring that sellers and suppliers comply with the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for pork.

This, AGRI Party-list Rep. Wilbert T. Lee cited recent reports indicating that retail prices for pork have exceeded ₱400 per kilogram, despite a decrease in farm gate prices for the commodity.

Lee stressed the need for stricter enforcement measures to protect consumers and ensure fair pricing.

"The current situation where pork prices exceed the government's suggested retail price is unacceptable. The DA must take decisive action against those who exploit the system, causing undue burden on consumers," he said.

According to data from the DA's Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service, only 20 percent of over 170 monitored stalls in Metro Manila have complied with the MSRP for pork.

The DA said that the declining farm gate prices, which have fallen from ₱250 to ₱220 per kilogram, should ideally result in lower retail prices. However, the persistent high prices suggest that intermediaries may be inflating costs.

AGRI Party-list which is running for reelection in the 2025 National and Local Elections, also underscored the importance of supporting local hog raisers, who have been adversely affected by the African Swine Fever (ASF) outbreak.

AGRI Party-list earlier called on the DA that hog raisers should be protected from potential financial losses amid pork MSRP. It further noted that while farmgate prices have decreased, the benefits are not being passed on to consumers.

“Our local hog raisers are striving to recover from the ASF crisis. It’s disheartening to see their efforts undermined by intermediaries who prioritize profit over fairness,” it said.

AGRI Party-list proposed increasing the frequency and coverage of market inspections to ensure compliance with MSRP guidelines.

"The DA should also facilitate platforms, such as additional Kadiwa centers nationwide, where consumers can purchase pork directly from producers to liberate them from the control of unscrupulous traders and middlemen," the party-list said.

AGRI Party-list stressed that “ensuring that agricultural products are sold at fair prices is not just about regulation, it’s about safeguarding the livelihood of our farmers, fisherfolk, hog raisers and local food producers and the well-being of our consumers”.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/25/da-must-ensure-msrp-compliance-on-pork-says-solon>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Israeli investments eye Philippine growth amid regional tensions

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Mar 25, 2025 04:31 PM



Ambassador of Israel to the Philippines Ilan Fluss

Israel, which is engaged in a long-running war against militant group Hamas, sees potential in growing its economy through investments and business expansions in the Philippines, according to Ambassador of Israel to the Philippines Ilan Fluss.

In a chance interview on Tuesday, March 25, Fluss explained that the ongoing conflict is not a barrier for Israelis doing business in the country.

He said the Middle Eastern country is always on the lookout for international markets where its private sector can thrive, given that its domestic market is “limited.”

The Philippines is one of these markets where Israeli investors see many business opportunities, driven primarily by its talented pool of potential workers combined with its vast population.

“Being a country of 115 million people, so a lot of consumers, a lot of challenges, which means a lot of opportunities,” Fluss explained.

The envoy noted that creating more awareness and interest in the Philippines is his top priority with these opportunities at the ready.

He recalled that seven business delegations from Israel visited the country last year, which implies a growing appeal.

On Tuesday, Israel-based agribusiness company LR Group joined Metro Pacific Agro Ventures Inc.’s (MPAV) launch of the More Veggies Please brand as the main provider of its farm technologies.

This is expected to be the first among many Israeli companies looking to expand in the country’s agriculture sector.

Fluss said they are particularly keen on partnering with Filipino firms for “big projects” in the poultry and cacao industry.

Other sectors that could also drive Israeli investments are telecommunications, software, medicine, cybersecurity, emergency preparedness, cosmetics, and wine.

For the time being, the ambassador said what his office is focusing on is making sure that investors benefit from ease of doing business.

He explained that the time to get a business or project off the ground takes more time than what is necessary. Since Israel's latest campaign against Hamas started in 2023, the economic movement between the Philippines and the former is now "gaining momentum."

Fluss said Filipinos are slowly visiting Israel more often, while same can likewise be said to Israelis visiting the country.

"So I don't think the war is an issue. For me, I would say to the contrary...because of the war, we need to help the Israeli economy," the official said.

"And that's the best way for me as an ambassador to help the Israeli economy, is through opening new opportunities, which are good for Israel and are good for the Philippines," he added.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/25/israeli-investments-eye-ph-growth-amid-regional-tensions>

MANILA BULLETIN:

MVP-led Metro Pacific enters vegetable market with 'More Veggies Please'

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Mar 25, 2025 03:25 PM



Metro Pacific Agro Ventures Inc. (MPAV), a subsidiary of Manuel V. Pangilinan-led Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC), has launched a vegetable brand with the potential of introducing affordable market prices.

More Veggies Please, sourced from the country's largest greenhouse facility, Metro Pacific Fresh Farms (MPFF), allows Filipinos to choose more nutritious, high-quality produce.

In a press briefing on Tuesday, March 25, MPAV President and Chief Executive Officer Jovy Hernandez said its vegetable brand will have a "competitive edge" among consumers.

He said the reason for this is how the vegetables are grown, which relies on the nutrient film technique (NFT) and drip irrigation systems developed by Israel-based agribusiness company LR Group.

Leafy green vegetables are planted through NFT, a hydroponic system where plants stand in a shallow stream containing dissolved nutrients necessary for growth.

Hernandez said this style of farming can deliver the "right amount of nutrients at the right quantity at the right time" to every vegetable available in a controlled environment.

Meanwhile, other vegetable types utilize drip irrigation systems, which are a more efficient way of growing produce using a fraction of the resources normally required in conventional agriculture.

Compared to the conventional approach, NFT and drip systems use 90 percent less water and land yet can produce five times the yield.

"[There's] a stark difference between the quality NFT vegetables versus what is done in traditional farming. They'll get more value for the peso that they pay, so it's very competitive," he explained.

Hernandez added that the company will directly deliver its products to its partner firms, cutting the so-called middleman in the value chain—the frequently cited culprit behind higher prices of goods.



In a report by the World Nutrition Journal, Filipinos' vegetable consumption was found to be less than the recommended intake of 400 grams by the World Health Organization (WHO).

With the More Veggies Please, MPAV seeks to upend this trend to foster “a healthier, more sustainable future for the Philippines.”

As of writing, the brand's diverse vegetable portfolio will only be available in major supermarkets across Metro Manila, with plans to expand to other regions in the coming months.

It will also be made available in hotels, restaurants, food processors, hospitals, and other facilities through a sourcing agreement with MPFF.

Located in San Rafael, Bulacan, the MPFF is a 22-hectare property that houses 3.5 hectares worth of greenhouses, with plans to expand to at least seven hectares.

It is expected to produce up to 500 metric tons (MT) of fresh produce annually, with 144 MT of just leafy green vegetables alone.

Expansion eyed



In a statement, Pangilinan said MPIC's more stringent expansion into the agriculture sector is part of the conglomerate's vision of making the Philippines agriculturally independent.

“We want to help build a nation that's capable of feeding all of its people,” he said.

MPAV, the MPIC's agriculture arm, is seeking to make this plan into reality by replicating the MPFF all over the country, but on a smaller scale.

According to Hernandez, the company is set to establish ten satellite farms, around one hectare each, during the next five years.

So far, localities with a concentration of hotels, restaurants, and resorts are being considered potential sites. Investments are seen within the range of ₱500 million to ₱800 million.

The executive said they are already in discussions with several firms about beach estate locations and colder-climate areas in Northern Luzon.

"We've seen the benefits in terms of production scale and also the quality. And if we are true to our purpose of really democratizing this and really giving this to the Filipino consumer if we can expand to as many provinces as we can as soon as possible, then we will do so," he added.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/25/mvp-led-metro-pacific-enters-vegetable-market-with-more-veggies-please>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

MPIC agri unit aims to improve local milk, vegetable production

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:08 AM March 26, 2025

Share:



SEEING GREEN. Metro Pacific Agro Ventures Inc. has unveiled its P800-million vegetable greenhouse facility in San Rafael town in Bulacan. Present during the occasion are (from left) Bimsy Mapa, Chief Project Officer, Metro Pacific Agro Ventures; Toby Gatchalian, Chief Commercial Officer, MPAVs; Ilan Weiss, Chairman and Executive Director of Innovative Agriculture Industry Private Limited Jovy Hernandez, President and CEO, MPAVs; Manny V. Pangilinan, Chairman, President and CEO of Metro Pacific Investments Corp; Ambassador Ilan Fluss, Israel Ambassador; Chaye Cabal – Revilla, MPIC Executive Vice President, Chief Finance, Risk, and Sustainability Officer; Stanley Yang, Executive Director, MPIC, Cholo Violago, Mayor of San Rafael, Bulacan and Reggie Gripal, Chief Finance Officer, MPAV. Photo courtesy of MPAV

SAN RAFAEL, Bulacan – The agri-food business of tycoon Manuel Pangilinan-led Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC) has set its expansion in motion by constructing more satellite greenhouse facilities nationwide and completing a dairy facility in May.

MPIC subsidiary Metro Pacific Agro Ventures Inc. (MPAV) unveiled its P800-million vegetable greenhouse facility here.

The first phase of Metro Pacific Fresh Farms (MPFF) facility spanning 3.5 hectares is expected to produce up to 500 metric tons of fresh produce annually.

According to MPAV, the greenhouse facility can yield around 60,000 lettuce heads per month and 144 metric tons a year of leafy greens alone.

The Bulacan greenhouse is equipped with state-of-the-art technology developed by Israeli agribusiness company LR Group.

Funny Texas Signs That Show Why Everything Really Is Bigger Here [BridesBlush](#)

The Israeli firm uses modern techniques, such as nutrient film technique for leafy greens and drip irrigation systems for other vegetable types, to grow fresh produce efficiently at a lower cost.

“With yields up to five times higher than traditional farms, MPFF ensures a stable, year-round supply—addressing key challenges in the country’s agricultural sector,” it said.

In an interview, MPAV president and CEO Jovy Hernandez said the entity intended to construct 10 satellite greenhouses for growing vegetables in different parts of the Philippines in the next five years.

“The target is to at least bring two more [satellite greenhouse facilities] every year,” Hernandez said. “If we can do more before that, [it’s] better.”

MPAV chief commercial officer Toby Gatchalian said the development of the first satellite greenhouse facility in the archipelago was underway, slated for operation next year.

“Beyond Bulacan, we’re also looking up north because we’re looking into strawberries as well. In this facility, we’re also looking into melons,” Gatchalian said.

The size of each satellite greenhouse facility, pegged as the smaller version of the San Rafael facility, is about one hectare.

“We’re actually looking at different localities [that] have a concentration of hotels, restaurants and resorts. We are in discussions already with several entities for beach estate locations, but not limited to just tourist spots,” he told reporters.

Gatchalian said MPAV was in talks with supermarkets to sell MPFF vegetable produce directly to consumers within this month.

6M liters of milk a year

Meanwhile, MPAV’s planned dairy facility in Bay town in Laguna province is slated for completion in two months’ time. A partnership with LR Group, it is designed to produce six million liters of milk annually.

Hernandez said 220 pregnant cows imported from Australia were expected to arrive in May.

He explained that the Laguna dairy farm was expected to produce milk for the company by September at the earliest, adding that cows were expected to give birth by August and begin producing milk the following month.

“So our target [is] by 2027, we should be delivering 10 million liters annually,” added Hernandez.

<https://business.inquirer.net/515299/mpic-agri-unit-aims-to-improve-local-milk-vegetable-production>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DOST seeks to revive salt industry in Misamis Oriental

By: [Nef Luczon](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine News Agency](#) / 07:40 AM March 26, 2025

Share:



(File photo of Alubijid, Misamis Oriental LGU)

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY — The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) in Northern Mindanao is revitalizing Misamis Oriental’s salt industry through innovative technologies.

DOST-10 Assistant Director Virgilio Fuertes gave the information during the “Kapihan sa Bagong Pilipinas” forum on Tuesday.

Fuertes said the agency has partnered with the Industrial Technology Development Institute (ITDI) to modernize traditional salt production in Alubijid town.

“While local producers have relied on sun-drying since the 1980s, our new cooking and evaporation technologies will enable year-round production, even during rainy seasons,” he explained.

The initiative comes as part of DOST-10’s broader economic development programs in Northern Mindanao. Under the Community Empowerment Through Science and Technology (CEST) program, the agency completed P19.2 million in funding last year, supporting 20 projects that benefited 30 people’s organizations. The Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (SETUP) also allocated P39.8 million to 43 enterprises, resulting in 500 new jobs.

Current monitoring shows 136 ongoing projects across the region, with 59 percent reporting combined revenues of P817.7 million and demonstrating an average income growth of 21 percent.

DOST-10 Director Romela Ratilla said the revival of the salt industry aligns with their four-pillar framework focusing on wealth creation, protection, sustainability and human well-being.

“From salt production to high-tech enterprises, we’re creating sustainable livelihoods across all sectors,” Ratilla said.

The DOST plans to conduct hands-on training in Alubijid next month to demonstrate the new evaporation systems.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2046920/dost-seeks-to-revive-salt-industry-in-misamis-oriental>

BUSINESS WORLD:

MPIC unit opens 3.5-hectare Bulacan greenhouse complex

March 25, 2025 | 8:49 pm



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

METRO PACIFIC Agro Ventures (MPAV), a unit of Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC), opened a 3.5-hectare vegetable greenhouse complex on Tuesday in San Rafael, Bulacan.

Metro Pacific Fresh Farms (MPFF) is planned for eventual expansion to seven hectares, MPAV CEO and President Jovy I. Hernandez told reporters.

The first phase of MPFF, consisting of six greenhouses, promises yields equivalent to five times those of traditional farms, promising up to 500 metric tons of fresh vegetables annually.

The farm can produce around 60,000 heads of lettuce each month.

Aside from leafy vegetables, the greenhouses also produce melons and tomatoes, among others, which will be sold under the brand name More Veggies Please.

“The vision behind these investments is an agriculturally independent Philippines,” MPIC Chairman, President, and CEO Manuel V. Pangilinan said.

“We want to help build a nation that’s capable of feeding all of its people.”

The greenhouse is equipped with technology developed by the LR Group, an Israeli agribusiness company.

The technology includes a nutrient film technique for leafy greens and drip irrigation systems for other types of vegetable, enabling efficient growing with less resources than in conventional agriculture.

This allows vegetables to be grown using 90% less water and land, it said.

The greenhouses are designed to withstand typhoons as strong as Signal No. 4 in the Philippine storm warning classification, indicating winds exceeding 185 kph.

The MPFF facilities require less chemical pesticides and fertilizer, cutting exposure to contaminants by 90-99%. Mr. Hernandez said MPFF removes middlemen from the value chain, with the produce — harvested every 27 days — directly delivered to its clients such as hypermarkets, hotels, restaurants, and food processors right after packaging.

Businesses can partner with MPFF in customizing their supply based on demand trends and customer preferences.

The company seeks to put up 10 satellite sites across the country in 10 years, according to Mr. Hernandez. The Board of Investments granted the vegetable farm project green lane status in 2023 in recognition of its status as a strategic investment. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/03/25/661763/mpic-unit-opens-3-5-hectare-bulacan-greenhouse-complex/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Israeli firms working on at least two PHL agricultural projects

March 25, 2025 | 8:49 pm



REUTERS

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

ISRAELI companies are working on poultry and cacao projects in the Philippines, Israel’s ambassador to Manila Ilan Fluss told *BusinessWorld* on the sidelines of a greenhouse launch in Bulacan province.

He said Israeli companies are also exploring investments in healthcare, software, and telecommunications.

Israeli investors need to branch out overseas because of the small domestic market, Mr. Fluss said.

“The mindset of an Israeli businessman is international because the domestic market is not so big,” he said. “So, we always look at the international market when we need to grow,” he added.

“Israeli companies realize that the Philippines is a major market, and it’s a country where there are so many opportunities,” he added.

Mr. Fluss said one of the major challenges for Israeli companies seeking to do business in the Philippines is identifying a “solid” partner.

Seven Israeli business delegations visited the Philippines in 2024, representing the agriculture, water, cosmetics, and wine industries, as well as companies specializing in cybersecurity and disaster preparedness, he noted.

Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen in 2023 told President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. that the Philippines and Israel can collaborate in water management, given Israel’s expertise.

“We would like to do more sharing of best practices (via) government-to-government (negotiations),” Mr. Fluss said.

The two countries’ bilateral trade hit \$532 million in 2023, against \$534 million a year earlier.

Israeli exports to the Philippines in 2023 were valued at \$349 million and included integrated circuits, vessels, and armored vehicles.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/03/25/661762/israeli-firms-working-on-at-least-two-phl-agricultural-projects/>

MANILA STANDARD:

DA seeks NBI assistance on farmer's suicide online claims



Agriculture secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel

By [Manila Standard](#)

March 26, 2025, 12:20 am

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has sought the National Bureau of Investigation's (NBI) assistance in verifying social media claims that at least three farmers in Nueva Ecija took their own lives due to sharp decreases in palay prices.

Agriculture secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. expressed concern over how some groups are portraying these “unfortunate incidents,” noting that such claims contradict official reports from law enforcement, DA investigations, and statements from the families of the deceased.

“Let us allow them to mourn in peace. We will provide any necessary assistance,” he said as he requested the NBI for a thorough probe to uncover the truth while urging the public to respect the grieving families.

Addressing the ongoing price slump, he highlighted the NFA's limited budget prevents]ing it from purchasing significant volumes.

The agency buys palay at P18 per kilo for fresh harvests and P24 per kilo for clean, dry grains.

He added that the agency's regulatory powers have been stripped, hampering its ability to stabilize rice prices through market interventions.

“With restricted authority, the NFA cannot effectively counter market fluctuations, allowing traders to suppress palay prices. As a result, farmgate prices have fallen to as low as P14 per kilo,” he explained.

The DA chief also attributed the local price drop to a global market correction, citing strong global demand amid El Niño-driven shortages and price escalation due to India's ban on non-basmati rice exports that was lifted in September 2024.

He urged lawmakers to pass reforms granting the DA greater authority to address such issues.

“We are operating with one hand tied behind our back. Some of the NFA's powers must be restored—if not to the agency itself, then to the DA—to better manage these challenges. The NFA also needs more resources to procure at least 20 percent of the supply to help stabilize market prices,” Tiu Laurel said.

The NFA encouraged Regions I, II, and III to sell their harvests directly to the agency, raising its buying price to P19 per kilo for fresh palay in those areas.

Under its mandate, the NFA must maintain a 15-day rice buffer stock of 555,000 metric tons with plans to secure 880,000 metric tons of palay to meet this requirement.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314572590/da-seeks-nbi-assistance-on-farmers-suicide-online-claims.html>

MANILA STANDARD:

Boosting agriculture



By [Manila Standard](#)

March 26, 2025, 1:00 am

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. met with Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. yesterday at Malacañan Palace to discuss the department's new projects. Among the projects presented during the meeting were the Department of Agriculture's plan for a cold storage expansion project and the establishment of food hubs in strategic locations nationwide.

<https://manilastandard.net/gallery/314572627/boosting-agriculture.html>

THE MANILA TIMES:

NBI asked to probe alleged farmer suicides

By Giselle P. Jordan

March 26, 2025

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) asked the assistance of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in looking into claims that some farmers in Nueva Ecija took their own lives due to low palay (unmilled rice) prices.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. expressed alarm on how some groups are portraying these incidents. He said that these are contradictory from the DA's investigative reports as well as records from law enforcement and families of farmers.

On Monday, the secretary sent a letter to the NBI, requesting a thorough investigation on the matter to reveal the truth behind the claims. He also requested the public to respect the families in grief.

"Let us allow these families to grieve in peace. We will provide any assistance necessary," he said.

The secretary said that while the National Food Authority (NFA) has been purchasing palay at P18 per kilogram (kg) for fresh palay and P24/kg for clean and dry palay, it is unable to buy significant volumes from farmers due to its limited budget.

With the NFA's regulatory powers stripped, it cannot sell its stocks to the public and effectively manage rice inventories, Tiu Laurel said.

"With its limited authority, the NFA cannot intervene in the market effectively, leaving traders room to suppress palay prices," he said.

"This has led to the current farmgate prices dropping to as low as P14 per kilo."

Tiu Laurel also noted that the decline in local prices is associated with the global market correction. Global prices were previously at their highest for over two years due to India's ban on the exportation of non-basmati rice in August 2023 (lifted in September last year) and an increase in global demand last year as a result of an anticipated supply shortage due to El Niño.

However, the DA chief assured the public that the government is doing everything in its power to protect the livelihood of farmers and the welfare of consumers. He also called on lawmakers to work on legislation that could empower the agency to address issues like this.

"We need some of the NFA's powers back — if not to the agency itself, then to the DA — to better address the challenges we face," said Tiu Laurel.

The secretary also added that the NFA is in need of additional resources to enable it to buy a bigger volume of palay — to around 20 percent of the supply — to enable it to influence market prices.

NFA administrator Larry Lacson also encouraged farmers from Regions 1 (Ilocos), 2 (Cagayan Valley) and 3 (Central Luzon) to directly sell their palay harvests to the agency. The NFA has raised its palay buying price in those regions to P19/kg.

Based on the amended Rice Tariffication Law, the NFA is required to maintain a rice buffer stock equivalent to 15 days of national consumption. This translates to 550,000 metric tons (MT) of rice, which necessitates the agency to procure 880,000 MT of palay. A third of this amount is expected to be sourced from the country's dry season harvest.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/26/regions/nbi-asked-to-probe-alleged-farmer-suicides/2079653>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Rehab of mango trees ongoing in Zambales

By Mahatma Randy V. Datu

March 26, 2025

IBA, Zambales — While tourism stakeholders in Zambales prepare for the annual Dinamulag Mango Festival, the provincial government is preoccupied in improving production to sustain the local mango industry.

Gov. Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. said on Monday the provincial government's flagship program to revitalize the Zambales mango industry is now on its second phase, setting the rehabilitation and rejuvenation of some 20,800 mango trees in the province at a cost of P40 million.

This four-year phase, from 2025 to 2028, comprises the bulk of the P50-million Zambales Mango Green Valley Project launched last year to increase mango production yield, encourage farm owners and contractors to adopt modern farm technologies, and promote good agricultural practices for long-term sustainability and profitability.



BIG BOOST Domingo Mariano (right), technical working group head for the Zambales Mango Industry Council, confers with Samahan ng Magmamangga ng Zambales president Enrico Batungbacal (left) during a recent visit at the Batungbacal Farms in Palauig, Zambales. PHOTO BY MAHATMA RANDY DATU

Ebdane said that after Phase 1, which established modern mango production areas to serve as demo farms for modern mango production technology, Phase 2 now focuses on rehabilitating existing carabao mango trees through improved farm management, fertilization and irrigation techniques.

A key component in this stage, the governor said, is capacity-building and training, which shall be undertaken in collaboration with the President Ramon Magsaysay State University and the Samahan ng Magmamangga ng Zambales (SMZ).

Ebdane said that efforts to improve production are crucial to the local industry because, while Zambales is known for producing the tastiest mango fruits in the country, the province produces only 2.3 tons of mangoes per hectare, which is way below the national average of 12 tons per hectare.

"We're now aiming for 12 tons, too," the governor said. "This is the more important, and more difficult, part of sustaining the mango industry because we have to exponentially increase quantity without sacrificing quality to make local mangoes more competitive."

Ebdane said that while product promotion has been going on in decades with the annual mango festival, it was only last year under the Zambales Mango Green Valley Project that serious product development through modern production techniques started under a provincewide program.

Domingo Mariano, who heads the technical working group for the Zambales Mango Industry Council, said three pilot areas were established to introduce new production technology to local growers.

Last December, the provincial government released P6.4 million to the SMZ under a conditional assistance program to set the collaboration project in motion, Mariano said.

SMZ president Enrico Batungbacal said the cash assistance was used for pre-spray clearing, flower induction, chemical application, fruit bagging, irrigation and fertilization, security and harvesting at the pilot farms.

The provincial government, through the Provincial Agriculture Office, will also initiate Phase 3 of the project next year to propagate scions and seedlings of the Sweet Elena variety from Santa Cruz, Zambales. This variety was named in 1995 by the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's sweetest.

Ebdane said that under Phase 3, a mango training center and a postharvest processing facility are being established under a usufruct agreement with the Region 3 Mango Stakeholders Association Inc. These facilities, awarded under the Department of Agriculture's High Value Crops Development Program, will enhance mango farming education, improve postharvest handling and elevate production standards in Zambales.

"The Mango Green Valley Project will be a continuing program, and already, we are considering a marketing component that will include branding, product exportation, as well as greenhouse cultivation," Ebdane said.

"We will be constantly refining and updating this program as we go along," he added.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/26/regions/rehab-of-mango-trees-ongoing-in-zambales/2079885>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

NFA must buy 20% of local rice to influence prices—DA

Ada Pelonia
March 26, 2025

The Department of Agriculture (DA) again asked Congress and the national government to put in place measures that would allow the National Food Authority (NFA) to influence local rice prices.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the NFA would need to procure some 20 percent of local supply to move the needle on palay prices.

“We are doing this with one hand tied behind our back. We need some of the NFA’s powers back—if not to the agency itself, then to the DA—to better address the challenges we face,” Laurel said in a statement.

“The NFA also needs additional resources to buy a larger volume of palay—around 20 percent of the supply—to influence market prices,” he added.

Laurel said the grains agency is grappling with a limited budget which hampers it from purchasing “significant” volumes from farmers and managing rice inventories through regular sales to the public as it was stripped of its regulatory powers.

The NFA has been purchasing palay at P18 per kilo for fresh harvests and P24 per kilo for clean, dry grains, the DA said.

“With its limited authority, the NFA cannot intervene in the market effectively, leaving traders room to suppress palay prices,” he said. “This has led to the current farmgate prices dropping to as low as P14 per kilo.”

Laurel also noted that the decline in local prices is tied to a global market correction.

For over two years, global quotations of the staple grain surged driven by India’s ban on non-basmati rice exports in 2023 (which was lifted last September) and increased global demand last year due to anticipated supply shortages caused by the El Niño phenomenon.

Probe

The DA has called on the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to look into claims that at least three farmers in Nueva Ecija took their lives due to the slump in palay prices.

In a letter sent to the NBI on Monday, Laurel requested a thorough investigation in the hopes it would provide the public with the truth behind the allegations.

He also stressed the need for compassion, urging the public to respect the bereaved families.

“Let us allow these families to grieve in peace. We will provide any assistance necessary,” he said.

Meanwhile, NFA Administrator Larry Lacson urged farmers in Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, and Central Luzon to sell their harvests directly to the grains agency, which has raised its buying price to P19 per kilo for fresh palay in those regions.

Under the amended Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), the grains agency should maintain a 15-day buffer stock of rice or 555,000 metric tons (MT). To achieve this, the agency must procure 880,000 MT of palay, a third of which is expected to come from the dry season harvest.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/26/nfa-must-buy-20-of-local-rice-to-influence-prices-da/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

NFA set to rent warehouses to store more local palay

Samuel P. Medenilla
March 26, 2025

MALACAÑANG said the National Food Authority (NFA) is ready to rent warehouses so it can buy more rice from farmers during the ongoing harvest season.

“If the warehouse will have insufficient capacity, NFA will rent [it],” Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said in a news briefing on Tuesday.

Castro made the statement when asked about reports that the NFA in Nueva Ecija is unable to procure rice from farmers because its warehouse is already full.

Citing information from NFA Administrator Larry del Rosario Lacson, Castro said the NFA warehouses (in other areas) can still accommodate more palay from farmers.

“All the farmers who will be selling... they just need to line up because it’s peak season now and there are farmers who first signed up and all of them are given priority,” she explained.

The prevailing buying price of NFA for newly-harvested palay in the Ilocos, Cordillera Administrative Region, and Central Luzon is at P18 per kilo and for dry rice, it is at P24 per kilo.

This buying rate of NFA for dry palay is much higher compared to the average buying price from local traders at P20.29 per kilo, which was recorded by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) last month.

In January, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel Jr. said the NFA will sell 300,000 metric tons (MT) of buffer stock so it can make space in its warehouses in time for the start of the harvest season this year.

In a related development, Castro said the Marcos administration will continue to push measures to improve the income of local farmers, which includes the completion of the Cavite-Laguna Expressway (Calax) Subsection 3.

She said the new infrastructure will help reduce the price of food in Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon).

“If we can reduce the travel time, it will definitely also reduce the fuel consumption and it will benefit all travelers and also those that will transport food and other necessities, it will also go down—the price will also go down,” Castro said.

She said the government is also eyeing the establishment of food hubs and cold storage facilities to help supply and price stability of fruits and vegetables.

She said the said infrastructure projects were discussed during President Marcos’ sectoral meeting in Malacañang on Tuesday.

DA earlier announced that it allocated P3 billion for the construction of 99 cold storage facilities this year.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/26/nfa-set-to-rent-warehouses-to-store-more-local-palay/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DTI, DA trade mission secures \$27.28M in sales, boosts ME economic ties

BusinessMirror
March 26, 2025

The Philippines' business mission to the Middle East generated \$27.28 million in export sales from February 7 to 21.

This achievement marks the first major initiative following the newly signed memorandum of agreement on Agriculture and Fisheries Export Development and Promotion between the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA).

The mission aimed to enhance market opportunities and strengthen trade partnerships for Philippine agricultural, fisheries, and personal care exports in key markets like Doha, Amman, Riyadh, and Dubai.

To accomplish this, Filipino exporters engaged with buyers, distributors, and industry leaders through a series of activities, including store visits, supplier meetings, and business-matching sessions.

The delegation also participated in Gulfood 2025, which provided a platform to discuss market entry and compliance matters with the Qatar Ministry of Public Health and the Dubai Municipality.

On top of this, the Jordan Food and Drug Administration and the Jordan Ministry of Agriculture further expressed a strong interest in sourcing additional Philippine marine products and tropical fruits, opening avenues for growth in non-traditional export markets.

“The success we have seen in the business mission reflects the growing global recognition of the quality and competitiveness of Philippine agri-fishery and consumer products. As we continue to forge stronger connections with key markets in this region, we are laying the groundwork for sustained growth and long-term success for our exporters that ensure our local export goods remain in high demand worldwide,” said DTI Secretary Cristina A. Roque.

“The business-to-business [B2B] meetings provided us with valuable insights into our operations in the United Arab Emirates [UAE]. We realized that our current business structure for marketing our products is no longer adaptable to the area's current setup. We have also identified other markets to explore, which has helped us recognize avenues for growth,” shared HDR Foods Corp's Aris Unson.

“Through the B2B, we were able to discuss our concerns with our distributor, including the marketing strategies we wanted to implement. HDR Foods is hopeful that, after the B2B activities, our products will have a greater presence across the UAE,” Unson added.

The Philippine Exporters Confederation, Inc. supported the mission organized by the Philippine Trade and Investment Centers in Riyadh and Dubai in coordination with the region’s Philippine Embassies under the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Participating companies included Axelum Resources Corp., C and H Cosmetics Industry Daila Wholesale LLC., Destileria Limtuaco & Co., Inc., Dry Tech Manufacturing Corp., Ferino’s Bibingka, Fisherfarms, Inc., Global Foodsolutions, Inc., Golden Arrow Food Enterprises, Gwen’s Bakeshop, HDR Foods Corporation, International Pharmaceuticals, Inc., KKK Food Corporation, Kwaliti Philfood Inc., La Carlota Food Enterprise, Market Reach International Resources, McCormick Philippines, Mensch FilAm Corporation, Pixcel Transglobal Foods Inc., RPO Fine Foods Corporation, Sabroso Chocolate Manufacturing, SL Agritech Corporation, Sterling Pacific Ventures Corp., Sumifru Philippines Corporation, and The Cabalen Group.

For inquiries regarding Philippine exports, send an e-mail to the DTI-Export Marketing Bureau at exports@dti.gov.ph or visit tradelinphilippines.dti.gov.ph.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/26/dti-da-trade-mission-secures-27-28m-in-sales-boosts-me-economic-ties/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA ties up with Japan to improve E. Visayas banana production

Sarwell Meniano / PNA
March 26, 2025



Officials from the Department of Agriculture Eastern Visayas and some parliamentarians of Hiroshima Prefecture in Japan during a meeting in Tacloban City on March 19, 2025. The visit seeks to improve banana production in the region.

TACLOBAN CITY—The Department of Agriculture (DA) regional office here has partnered with the prefectural government of Hiroshima, Japan, to improve banana production in Eastern Visayas.

Rodel Macapañas, DA regional field operations division chief, said on Monday that 13 parliamentarians of Hiroshima Prefecture met with them to benchmark the banana production in the region on March 19 in this city.

Japanese officials are upbeat that the visit will lead to the development of international exchange between Hiroshima and the Philippines, Macapañas said.

“As a strategic move to further upscale the banana industry in the region, the DA regional office sees an opportunity to team up with the Japanese government as they offer to extend technical assistance from various Japanese institutions,” Macapañas added.

During the visit, Hidenori Kobayashi, one of the Japanese delegates, said they came here to give their support to minimize the damage to banana production.

Japan developed a pathogen that can help eradicate “bugtok,” a bacterial disease common on bananas that significantly affects the production yield of this commodity.

“Bugtok” is an endemic and widely distributed bacterial disease of cooking banana cultivars in the Philippines.

It is a local term in the southern Philippines used to describe the infected fruits, which are discolored and hard even when ripe.

In a statement, Jenny Lyn Almeria, DA assistant regional director for research and regulations, appreciated the Japanese officials for the visit and collaboration.

“This will be the first of our partnership and collaboration. We hope you can extend to us the best we can do for our banana industry,” she said.

Through these initiatives, the DA aims to make the banana industry in Eastern Visayas more competitive, resilient, and sustainable, ultimately improving the livelihoods of local farmers and contributing to the region’s economic development, according to Almeria.

Eastern Visayas is the top producer of bananas in the central Philippines with a harvest of 226,602.84 metric tons.

The crop is grown along the roadside, on the mountainside, in home lots, and on both big and small farms.

Image credits: [DA Eastern Visayas](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/26/da-ties-up-with-japan-to-improve-e-visayas-banana-production/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DTI boosts Sultan Kudarat coffee farmers with new machinery, skills under RAPID Growth

BusinessMirror
March 26, 2025

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), has successfully distributed coffee farm rejuvenation tools to 1,142 farmers in the municipalities of Lebak, Senator Ninoy Aquino, and Kalamansi.

Through its provincial office in Sultan Kudarat, the DTI provided pruning shears, saws, grafting knives, knapsack sprayers, and chainsaws to support the rehabilitation of local coffee farms, ensuring their resilience and long-term industry sustainability.

Implemented under the Rural Agro-enterprise Partnership for Inclusive Development (RAPID) Growth Project, this project underscores the DTI's commitment to boosting the coffee industry and uplifting small-scale farmers in the region.

Provincial Director Mary Ann M. Morales of Sultan Kudarat, highlighted the significance of combining technical training with material support.

“By integrating Good Agricultural Practices [GAP] training with the distribution of rejuvenation tools, we are empowering our coffee farmers with the skills and resources necessary to restore their farms and elevate their yields. This initiative will not only improve productivity and bean quality but will also pave the way for a more resilient and thriving coffee industry in Sultan Kudarat,” Provincial Director Morales said.

Equipped with new farming tools and technical knowledge, coffee farmers are expected to increase their productivity that will drive economic growth in Sultan Kudarat and the broader SOCCSKSARGEN region.

Through the intervention, the DTI continues to champion sustainable coffee farming, ensuring that coffee farmers in Sultan Kudarat and the entire region move towards a more productive and more profitable future.

The RAPID Growth Project aims to intensify agro-enterprise development in rural areas by bringing employment, livelihood and enterprises to rural communities.

The project focuses on strengthening the coffee, cacao, coconut, and processed fruits and nuts industries across 21 provinces in six regions—Regions 8, 9, 10, 11, Caraga, and BARMM. Through capacity-building programs, financial assistance, market linkages, and infrastructure support, including farm-to-market roads

and post-harvest facilities, RAPID Growth equips farmers and MSMEs with the necessary tools to scale up their businesses.

Since its inception in 2019, the RAPID Growth Project has achieved 83.51% completion, and has already helped over 54,000 farming households, 631 farmer groups, and 797 MSMEs grow their businesses and improve their livelihoods.

With a strong emphasis on poverty reduction, the initiative aims to create sustained income growth for smallholder farmers and unemployed rural workers, helping uplift communities and drive long-term economic progress.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/26/dti-boosts-sultan-kudarat-coffee-farmers-with-new-machinery-skills-under-rapid-growth/>