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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Inspired by Thailand: DA to build mega food hubs in Clark, Quezon by 2026

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Mar 26, 2025 05:08 PM



(Left) Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel sharing future plans of the DA in a meeting in Malacañan Palace (PCO photo)

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is set to construct two mega food hubs in 2026 as part of the agency's ongoing efforts to expand access to high-quality, affordable goods to Filipinos.

In a press briefing on Wednesday, March 26, DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said this project was part of the agency's presentation before President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. yesterday.

"Yesterday we were in Malacañan and the President initially agreed on these concepts," said De Mesa, also the DA's spokesperson.

He noted that this project was partly inspired by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel's recent visit to Thailand, which houses food hubs spanning up to 80 hectares.

De Mesa said that Thai food hubs serve as venues for farmers to sell their produce, featuring cold storage facilities and other postharvest infrastructure that help extend shelf life.

Under the DA's plan, the first food hub will be constructed in Clark, Pampanga—on a property spanning 30 to 50 hectares—serving as a trading center for agricultural produce from Northern Luzon.

Meanwhile, the second will be located in Quezon province—covering around 20 to 30 hectares—catering goods from Southern Luzon and the Bicol region.

The two facilities have an estimated cost of ₱3 billion to ₱7 billion.

De Mesa said the construction will most likely begin early next year, with the funding source still under discussion.

State-owned corporation Food Terminal Inc. (FTI) will handle the operations of the facilities.

Certain "strategic locations" across Visayas and Mindanao are also being considered for such food hubs.

"If you have this kind of facilities... may sistema na magsasabi na ito yung mga presyuhan na hindi maapektuhan 'yung mga magsasaka, at 'yung consumer din ay hindi makakaranas ng sobrang mahal o sobrang kulang ng produkto," said De Mesa.

(If you have these kinds of facilities, there will be a system that determines the pricing in a way that farmers won't be affected, and consumers won't experience excessively high prices or a shortage of products.)

The official added that this could be the long-term solution to address the long-running "disconnect" between farmgate and retail prices.

Based on the Facebook post of the Presidential Communications Office (PCO), the DA also told the President its plan for a cold storage expansion project.

This aligns with the DA's plan to allocate around ₱3 billion for the construction of approximately 99 cold storage facilities across the country. Not only will this help extend the shelf life of key produce, it will also ensure supply and price stability.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/26/da-to-build-mega-food-hubs-in-clark-quezon-next-year>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Palace backs calls to give NFA more power to influence price movement of rice

BY [ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS](#)

Mar 26, 2025 01:37 PM

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## AT A GLANCE

- According to Castro, the NFA and the DA are unable to go directly to the farmers as they first have to go to LGUs.

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Malacañang has agreed with calls to Congress to give the National Food Authority (NFA) more power and resources so it can buy 20 percent of local rice and influence its price in the market.



*Communications Undersecretary Claire Castro (RTVM)*

"I hope mapag-aralan muli ng Kongreso itong Rice Tariffication Act para po maayos din po at mabigyan po ng tamang authority ang NFA (I hope the Congress will take another look at the Rice Tariffication Act to fix the issue and to give the NFA proper authority)," Communications Undersecretary Claire Castro said on Wednesday, March 26.

"Maganda po sana po mabigyan muli ng authority ang NFA kasi nawalan po talaga sila ng power para po umangkat ng bigas (It's better if the NFA will again have the authority because they lost the power to buy rice)," she added.

According to the Palace Press Officer, the NFA and the Department of Agriculture (DA) are unable to go directly to the farmers as they first have to go to the local government units (LGUs).

"Yan po yung medyo nagiging problema po, o nagiging isyu po, sa Department of Agriculture, ayun na rin po yan kay Secretary Kiko (That is the problem or issue faced by the DA, according to Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.)," she said.

In a statement, Laurel said the NFA would need to procure some 20 percent of the local supply to address the issue and influence palay prices.

He added that the DA is grappling with a limited budget, stopping 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.

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

President Marcos had expressed support for moves to amend the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), saying the government should have some form of influence on how rice is sold in the country.

In May last year, Marcos said the price of rice was increasing because the government had no control over it.

"Ang problema kasi kaya tumataas yung presyo ng bigas, dahil ang mga trader ay nagko-compete (The problem why the price of rice is increasing is because traders are competing)," he said.

"Pataasan sila ng presyuhan sa pagbili ng palay at wala tayong control doon (They want to buy rice at a higher price and we have no control over that)," he added.

Signed by former president Rodrigo Duterte in 2019, the RTL lifted quantitative restrictions on rice and introduced tariffs to protect local rice producers.

It established the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), which enhances rice productivity and supports farmers. It also mandated the NFA to manage a buffer stock sourced solely from local farmers.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/26/give-nfa-more-power-rice>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Imported rice price cap lowered by DA to ₱45 as global supply improves

BY [DEXTER BARRO II](#)

Mar 26, 2025 02:17 PM



The maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice will be lowered from ₱49 per kilo to ₱45 beginning March 31, according to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel.

In a statement, Laurel said the MSRP was reduced following the continued decline in global rice prices.

“At this level, the retail price of imported rice has now decreased by ₱19 per kilo compared to its price before we implemented the MSRP on Jan. 20,” he explained.

Before the price ceiling was imposed, rice prices were monitored to remain high despite a stronger peso and last year’s rice tariff cuts from 35 percent to 15 percent.

Imported rice, in particular, was sold within the range of ₱62 to ₱64 per kilo.

This prompted the DA to impose an initial limit of ₱58 per kilo in a bid to maintain rice’s affordability for consumers while upholding the profitability of the rice industry.

“The implementation of the MSRP followed consultations with industry stakeholders to ensure that price reductions would not destabilize the rice industry or compromise food security,” said Laurel.

The MSRP has seen a gradual reduction since its implementation. It dropped to ₱55 on Feb. 5, then fell further to ₱52 on Feb. 15, and finally declined to ₱49 on Feb. 26.

In September last year, India ended its year-long ban on the export of non-basmati rice, boosting global rice supply.

The Agriculture Secretary said this has since resulted in rice prices dropping to their lowest levels in over two years, with some varieties now priced below \$380 per metric ton (MT).

Vietnam, the country’s main source of rice, also saw a recent decline in the price of five-percent broken rice to \$490 per MT, which is \$200 cheaper than in December.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) earlier recognized the MSRP for being an influential factor in reducing rice prices—pivotal in easing inflation last month.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/26/da-lowers-price-ceiling-on-imported-rice-to-45>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Government eyes P14 billion food hubs in Clark, Quezon province

**Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas** - The Philippine Star

March 27, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) plans to put up two major food hubs costing up to P14 billion that are expected to be operational next year to ensure better flow of commodities within key areas in Luzon.

The DA is eyeing one food hub in Clark and another in Quezon province to serve both the northern and southern parts of Luzon.

Each food hub, which will be bigger than the Nueva Vizcaya Agricultural Terminal Inc. (NVAT), may cost between P3 billion and P7 billion each, DA assistant secretary Arnel de Mesa said.

The DA will also put up similar food hubs in Visayas and Mindanao, De Mesa added.

The food hubs will serve as key trading posts for various agricultural products from vegetables to meat items. The food hubs will be surrounded with cold storages as well as other necessary infrastructure to support its operations.

Through the food hubs, the sudden plunge in prices of commodities like what happened to tomatoes could be averted since they will be stored and distributed properly, De Mesa said.

The food hub in Clark would be around 30 to 50 hectares while the one in Quezon would be between 20 to 30 hectares, De Mesa added. In comparison, the NVAT, which serves as a vital trading post in northern Luzon, is only about two hectares.

The DA took inspiration for the food hub from Thailand wherein 20 of its kind exist today and records about P900 million in sales everyday, De Mesa explained.

The construction of the food hubs is one of the priority projects identified earlier by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. to help stabilize domestic food prices.

“We lack food terminals in the country-places where buyers and sellers could transact on a wholesale level. This food hub will be part of the DA’s logistics roadmap,” Tiu Laurel earlier said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/03/27/2431293/government-eyes-p14-billion-food-hubs-clark-quezon-province>



**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

## **P45 rice max SRP begins March 31 – DA**

**[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star**

March 27, 2025 | 12:00am



“At this level, the retail price of imported rice has now decreased by P19 per kilo compared to its price before we implemented the max SRP on Jan. 20,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said yesterday.

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — A maximum suggested retail price (SRP) of P45 per kilo of imported rice will be enforced starting March 31 amid declining global rice prices, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

“At this level, the retail price of imported rice has now decreased by P19 per kilo compared to its price before we implemented the max SRP on Jan. 20,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said yesterday.

Before the max SRP’s implementation, imported rice was sold for P64 per kilo, he recalled.

Tiu Laurel imposed a max SRP after a 20-percent tariff cut failed to reduce rice prices.

Initially set at P58 per kilo on Jan. 20, the rice max SRP decreased to P55 per kilo on Feb. 5, P52 per kilo on Feb. 15 and P49 per kilo on March 1.

The Philippine Statistics Authority had recognized the max SRP as a key factor in reducing rice prices and helping to tame inflation, Tiu Laurel noted.

“In fact, the March inflation print of 2.1 percent was unexpectedly lower than both market and central bank predictions,” he said.

Global rice prices have dropped to their lowest levels in over two years, with some varieties now priced below \$380 per metric ton.

Before the rice max SRP declined to P49 per kilo, Tiu Laurel said the price of five-percent broken grains from Vietnam had decreased to \$490 per MT, approximately \$200 cheaper than in December.

Vietnam is the Philippines’ main source of imported rice.

Data from Food Terminal Inc. revealed the landed cost of imported rice in March ranged between P32 and P34 per kilo.

Total rice imports from January to March 20 reached 737,149 MT, with the bulk, or 588,953 MT, coming from Vietnam.

### **Farmers' suicide probed**

Meanwhile, farmers' reports of a widespread sale of P14 per kilo of palay are not fake news, former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor said yesterday.

The DA on Monday tapped the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to probe incidents wherein three Nueva Ecija farmers reportedly took their own lives due to the ongoing slump in palay prices.

"What's to be determined is whether their deaths were linked to low palay prices," Montemayor told The STAR.

DA spokesman Arnel de Mesa said a probe is necessary to determine the cause of the farmers' deaths.

"Based on the report of our enforcement offices and the report of the DA, there were deaths, but they did not commit suicide because of the low farmgate price of palay," he said.

Tiu Laurel has urged lawmakers to pass a measure empowering the DA to address these issues.

"We are doing this with one hand tied behind our back. We need some of the National Food Authority (NFA)'s powers back – if not to the agency itself, then to the DA – to better address the challenges we face," Tiu Laurel said.

"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.

NFA administrator Larry Lacson has encouraged farmers in Ilocos, Cagayan Valley and Central Luzon to sell their harvests directly to the agency, which has raised its buying price to P19 per kilo of fresh palay in those regions.

The NFA in Bulacan has also advised farmers to sell to the NFA dry and clean palay instead of fresh palay grains to improve their profit margin by an average of P500 to P550 per 50-kilo sack.

De Mesa noted that Tiu Laurel declared a food security emergency to release the NFA's rice stocks.

A measure must be passed allowing the NFA to intervene without needing a declaration of an emergency, he maintained.

The flooding of imported rice should not be blamed for the depressed farmgate price of palay, De Mesa said.

The Federation of Free Farmers has blamed the unlimited entry of cheap imports at low tariffs for the drastic drop in palay prices during the ongoing dry season harvest.

### **NFA powers**

Malacañang yesterday expressed support for the DA's proposal to provide the NFA more powers to sway rice prices as the government deals with the slump in palay prices.

Presidential Communications Undersecretary Claire Castro expressed hope that lawmakers would review the rice tariffication law since the NFA's limited powers has caused problems.

"It would be good if the NFA is given the authority again. It lost the power to import rice. For now, everything the NFA and DA do have to go through local government units, they cannot go directly to the farmers," she noted.

The Rice Tariffication Act of 2019 removed the NFA's regulatory and import licensing issuance functions and limited its role to emergency buffer stocking of rice bought from local farmers.

It also allowed the private sector to freely import rice subject to a tariff.

### **Pork max SRP**

Compliance with the max SRP for pork products has increased to 31 percent from 25 percent, the DA said.

Per the pork max SRP enforced since March 10, pork belly is set at P380 per kilo and pork shoulder is at P350.

As for “sabit ulo” or pig carcass, compliance with its max SRP of P300 per kilo went up to 25 percent from six percent, De Mesa said.

“This is good news... If the level of compliance for ‘sabit ulo’ increases, the level of compliance for the maximum retail price will also go up,” he said.

Tiu Laurel implemented the pork max SRP after retail prices reached as high as P480 per kilo.

The government may tap the NBI and Philippine National Police to go after violators of the pork max SRP, De Mesa said.

### **Chicken, egg prices up**

The retail price of chicken has reached P240 per kilo, up by P20 per kilo in the past month, the DA said.

Retail egg prices, meanwhile, are also increasing amid diseases affecting chicken layers, the agency noted.

Citing a Bureau of Animal Industry report, De Mesa said the poultry industry is affected by infectious laryngotracheitis (ILT) and inclusion body hepatitis (IBH).

ILT is a contagious respiratory disease in poultry caused by a herpesvirus. IBH is a disease caused by fowl adenoviruses that leads to acute hepatic necrosis, with mortality rates up to 80 percent.

“These are not transboundary diseases and can be easily controlled,” De Mesa said.

Ranging between P7.40 and P9 per piece, De Mesa said retail egg prices will not reach as high as P12.

De Mesa blamed the high cost of eggs on the disconnect between the farmgate and retail prices.

Chicken prices will not reach P300 per kilo and there will be no egg supply shortage, he said. – **Alexis**

**Romero, Ramon Efren Lazaro**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/03/27/2431386/p45-rice-max-srp-begins-march-31-da>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Probe sought as Nueva Ecija farmers' deaths linked to low palay prices

[Dominique Nicole Flores](#) - Philstar.com

March 26, 2025 | 3:46pm



**In this undated file photo, farmer harvests the rice from the field.**

The STAR/Andy G. Zapata Jr., File photo

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) has denied claims that at least three Nueva Ecija farmers took their own lives due to low palay prices but has asked the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to look into the matter.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement on Tuesday, March 25, that the agency's fact-finding report, along with accounts from law enforcement, contradicts the claims.

He also noted that the DA has also received statements from the families of the deceased.

Magsasaka Party-list Chairperson Argel Joseph Cabatbat first made the claim in a radio interview.

The National Food Authority (NFA) reported that it has been purchasing palay at P18 per kilogram for fresh harvests and P24 per kilogram for clean, dry grains.

However, Tiu Laurel said the NFA is struggling to purchase more sacks of palay from farmers due to its limited budget, adding that its “regulatory powers have been stripped.”

Farmer groups attributed this to the Rice Tariffication Law. The DA said the loss of these powers has “hindered its ability to manage rice inventories effectively through regular sales to the public.”

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

For the NFA to “influence market prices,” he mentioned that the agency would need additional resources to buy a larger volume of palay.

## Lower farmgate prices

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the national average [farmgate price](#) of fancy, dry palay stood at P21.79 per kilogram as of February, while other varieties of dry palay were priced at P20.29 per kilogram.

These prices were lower than in January, when prices were at P23.17 and P20.68 per kilogram, respectively. This means earnings for farmers are relatively lower.

The region with the lowest farmgate price can be found in Calabarzon, where palay is bought at P17.34 per kilogram.

NFA Administrator Larry Lacson said the agency has instructed farmers in Ilocos, Cagayan Valley and Central Luzon to sell their palay to the NFA, which will buy it at P19 per kilogram.

In early March, some lawmakers urged the DA to strictly monitor farmgate prices and ensure fairness, alongside its efforts to lower retail rice prices.

**RELATED:** [DA, NFA pressed to keep palay farmgate prices fair, reduce imports](#)

### **Caused by a 'global market correction'**

Tiu Laurel said the decline in local palay prices is part of a “global market correction.” He explained that global rice prices surged over the past two years as demand rose due to anticipated shortages caused by El Niño and supply tightened following India’s ban on non-basmati rice exports in August 2023.

The current drop in palay prices, he said, reflects a correction in supply and demand dynamics, especially as India’s ban had been lifted in September 2024.

For Tiu Laurel, the DA is doing its part with the resources available to protect farmers' livelihoods and ensure consumer welfare. However, he urged lawmakers to pass measures that would “empower the DA” to address these issues more effectively.

“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,” said Secretary Laurel.

**Latest rice prices.** As of March 25, the DA [recorded](#) the following commercial rice prices per kilogram in Metro Manila markets:

- **Imported**
  - **Special: P50 to P60**
  - **Premium: P48 to P51**
  - **Well-milled: P43 to P46**
  - **Regular milled: P35 to P45**
- **Local**
  - **Special: P53 to P64**
  - **Premium: P43 to P62**
  - **Well-milled: P40 to P54**
  - **Regular milled: P48 to P40**

The DA attributed the decline in well-milled rice prices in recent months to the staggered implementation of the maximum suggested retail price on imported rice since January 20.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/agriculture/2025/03/26/2431221/probe-sought-nueva-ecija-farmers-deaths-linked-low-palay-prices>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# DA sets MSRP of imported rice at P45 starting March 31

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)  
Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:54 AM March 27, 2025



NEW RICE POLICY Rice vendor Eddie Pascual waits for customers at Marikina Public Market on Monday as the Department of Agriculture says it will announce “very soon” the maximum suggested retail price for imported rice to help lower prices. —Grig C. Montegrando

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) further reduced the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) per kilogram (kg) for imported rice from P49 to P45, effective on March 31.

In a statement on Wednesday, the DA said it slashed the price ceiling for the imported staple in response to the softening of global rice prices.

“At this level, the retail price of imported rice has now decreased by P19 per kilo compared to its price before we implemented the MSRP on Jan. 20,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

This is the fourth reduction since the DA first introduced the MSRP for imported rice two months ago to arrest rising retail prices despite a reduction in the tariff rate from 35 percent to 15 percent effective July 2024.

“The implementation of the MSRP followed consultations with industry stakeholders to ensure that price reductions would not destabilize the rice industry or compromise food security,” the DA said.

The DA initially set the price ceiling for imported premium rice at P58 a kilo on Jan. 20. It was dropped to P55 per kg on Feb. 5 before it was further reduced to P52 per kg on Feb. 15. As of March 10, it was pegged at P49 per kg.

As of March 25, the price of imported regular and well-milled rice per kg was between P35 and P46 as opposed to P38 to P50 on Jan. 20, the first day of MSRP implementation, based on the DA's price monitoring of Metro Manila markets.

According to the DA, rice prices worldwide have dropped to their lowest levels in over two years, with some varieties now priced below \$380 per metric ton (MT).

Before this, it noted that the price of good-quality rice from Vietnam (5-percent broken grains) slid down to \$490 per MT in March. Vietnam is the country's leading imported rice supplier.

Furthermore, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations earlier reported that the FAO All Rice Price Index averaged 105.9 points in February, down by 6.8 percent from 113.6 points in January.

This benchmark is based on 21 rice export quotations across the four grain varieties—indica, aromatic, japonica and glutinous.

“The falls were driven by a combination of generally weak import demand, progress of the winter-spring harvest in Vietnam and favorable prospects for offseason crops in India and Thailand,” the FAO report said.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2047439/da-sets-msrp-of-imported-rice-at-p45-starting-march-31>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Rice tariff cut to blame for drop in palay prices, says farmers' group

By: [Dianne Sampang](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)  
INQUIRER.net / 08:35 PM March 26, 2025



(INQUIRER FILE PHOTO / GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE)

MANILA, Philippines — A farmers group on Wednesday said that the low import tariffs should be blamed for the decline in palay prices during the dry season harvest.

The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) pointed out the drop in international prices by the first quarter of March. “Palay traders are probably anticipating that the prices of imported rice will continue to fall, so they are playing safe by buying low from farmers,” said FFF Board Chairman and MAGSASAKA Party-list first nominee Leonardo Montemayor in a statement.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) recorded 641,000 metric tons (MT) of rice imports from January to mid-March 2025, significantly lower than the 1.2 MT recorded in the first quarter of 2024.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. signed Executive Order No. 62 in June 2024, implementing a tariff cut from 35% to 15% on rice and other agricultural products.

The FFF also urged the DA to address the decline in palay prices, emphasizing that the it should not deny reports of low palay prices and suicide committed by some farmers.

The DA on Monday said that they have to validate reports from the group that three farmers took their own lives due to low palay farmgate prices and over-importation of rice.

“It is sad that the DA, instead of commiserating with the plight of farmers, has blamed them for allegedly spreading fake news,” Montemayor added.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2047203/rice-tariff-cut-to-blame-for-drop-in-palay-prices-farmers-group>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Gov't cuts imported rice max suggested retail price to P45 per kilo

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 11:01 AM March 26, 2025



RICE WATCH Rice vendor Eddie Pascual waits for customers at his stall in Marikina Public Market. — GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

The Department of Agriculture (DA) announced Wednesday the lowering of the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice to P45 from P49 a kilo effective March 31.

In a statement, the agency said the MSRP was reduced in response to the softening of global rice prices.

“At this level, the retail price of imported rice has now decreased by P19 per kilo compared to its price before we implemented the MSRP on January 20,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

The DA first implemented the MSRP in January, as retail prices remained elevated despite slashing the tariff on imported rice to 15 percent and declining global prices.

<https://business.inquirer.net/515433/govt-cuts-imported-rice-max-suggested-retail-price-to-p45>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Imported rice MSRP declining to P45 per kilo at end of March

March 26, 2025 | 8:34 pm



**PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO**

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Wednesday it will reduce the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for imported rice to P45 per kilo on March 31, citing declining global rice prices.

The DA said in a statement that the lifting of India's year-long ban on the export of non-basmati white rice has pushed global rice prices to their lowest levels in over two years.

Some rice varieties are now priced below \$380 per metric ton, it said.

"At this level, the retail price of imported rice has now decreased by P19 per kilo compared to its price before we implemented the MSRP on Jan. 20," Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. said.

The lowering of the MSRP has raised concerns among farmers that the farmgate price of palay (unmilled rice) will fall further, as traders grow reluctant to carry domestic rice because of competition from cheaper imports.

The DA said before the MSRP was imposed, imported rice was selling for P64 per kilo "despite global rice prices softening, tariff reductions, and a stronger peso."

The agency first implemented the MSRP for imported rice on Jan. 20 at initial setting of P58 per kilo. It was further lowered to P52 on Feb. 15, and to P49 on March 1.

The DA said earlier this month it will likely lower the MSRP at the end of March if the current trend in world rice prices persists and the peso remains strong.

Prior to the MSRP reduction to P49 on March 1, the price of rice from Vietnam with 5% broken-grain content had fallen to \$490 per MT, about \$200 cheaper compared with December, according to the DA.

Vietnam is the Philippines' main overseas rice supplier.

The landed cost of imported rice in March for the DT8 variety was P32-34 per kilo, according to Food Terminal, Inc.

The DA in January declared a national rice emergency, citing an "extraordinary" spike in the price of the staple grain despite lower tariffs on imports.

Food security emergency declarations are a power given to the DA by Republic Act 12708 or the Agricultural Tariffication Act, which would trigger the release of rice reserves from National Food Authority (NFA) warehouses to stabilize prices.

Inflation eased to 2.1% in February from 2.9% in January as rice inflation dropped to 4.9%, the sharpest decline since April 2020.

The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) said on Tuesday that some farmers are selling freshly harvested palay for as little as P14 per kilo.

FFF National Director Raul Q. Montemayor said the situation of palay farmers will worsen if the government continues to impose reduced tariffs on rice imports.

Issued on June 20, 2024 Executive Order No. 62 reduced the tariffs for all rice imports to 15% from the 35% rate charged to grain from Southeast Asia.

“The strategy largely failed as importers and traders pocketed most of the savings from the tariff cuts instead of passing them on to consumers,” the FFF said.

Rice imports hit an all-time high of nearly 4.7 million metric tons (MT) in 2024 in response to a shortfall in domestic stocks and the resulting high prices.

In mid-January, Mr. Laurel said the government does not plan to resort to imports to bring down rice prices, which he blamed on profiteering.

The FFF noted that while inflows seem to have slackened in the first quarter of 2025, international prices have significantly declined, with the landed cost of Vietnam rice with 5% broken content amounting to just over P24 per kilo this month.

“Palay traders are probably anticipating that the prices of imported rice will continue to fall, so they are playing safe by buying low from farmers,” FFF Board Chairman Leonardo Q. Montemayor said.

The Tariff Commission on March 28 will hear a petition by FFF to restore rice import tariffs to 35% for Southeast Asian grain.

The FFF has also asked the commission to impose a 50% tariff on grain from all other countries of origin.

The FFF argued that restoring the 35% rice tariff will not unduly raise rice prices given the downtrend in import prices.

Rice imports fell 46% year on year to 641,000 MT in the year to date ending March 13.

The FFF, meanwhile, said the NFA remains unable to absorb the domestic harvest due to congestion in its warehouses, lack of drying and other post-harvest facilities, and limited procurement budget.

The 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.

— **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/03/26/662041/imported-rice-msrp-declining-to-p45-per-kilo-at-end-of-march/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Major food hubs to rise in Clark, Quezon

March 26, 2025 | 8:34 pm



**BFCT BAGSAKAN FACEBOOK PAGE**

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Wednesday it plans to build major food hubs in Clark and Quezon province next year to help stabilize produce prices.

One of the hubs will be constructed on 30–50 hectares in the Clark complex in Central Luzon, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel V. de Mesa told reporters.

The proposed Clark hub will be the main distribution center for produce from the north of Luzon.

The Quezon food hub will rise on 20-30 hectares, Mr. De Meza said.

He said President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. approved the proposals in a meeting with agriculture officials on Tuesday.

“Yesterday, we were in Malacañang and the President initially agreed on these concepts,” Mr. De Mesa said.

The Philippines is adopting the practice from Thailand, which has about 20 major food hubs of 50 to 80 hectares each.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. wants the food hubs to incorporate cold storage facilities, Mr. De Mesa said.

The DA earlier this month sent a delegation to Thailand led by Mr. Laurel to explore best practices in farming, product development, and agricultural supply chain management. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/03/26/662040/major-food-hubs-to-rise-in-clark-quezon/>



**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Apparent bid to smuggle sweetener foiled

March 26, 2025 | 8:33 pm



## BUREAU OF CUSTOMS FACEBOOK PAGE

SOME 10,000 bags of sweetener have been seized on suspicion that the cargo was misdeclared, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said.

The shipment was declared by importers as “white sweet powder” and is believed to contain 88% sugar and 12% glucose, SRA Administrator Pablo Luis S. Azcona said at a briefing late Tuesday.

The SRA is currently performing laboratory tests on the premixed products.

Mr. Azcona said imports of premixed products that contain more than the allowable sugar content are illegal.

“Anything that has 65% and up (of sugar) is sugar.”

Mr. Azcona said the suspected instance of technical smuggling disrupts the “whole price structure” for sugar and threatens the livelihoods of sugar farmers.

The SRA has yet to issue an import order for this year, he said.

The regulator said in February that it is upgrading its database of importers to clamp down on technical smuggling. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/03/26/662035/apparent-bid-to-smuggle-sweetener-foiled/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# National Food Month kicks off in Quezon province

March 27, 2025 | 12:05 am



**THE NEW LOGO for Filipino Food Month features figures of meat, fish, fruit, and vegetables. — ADONIS V. BUHAYAN/DA-AFID/DA.GOV.PH**

FILIPINO FOOD MONTH, celebrated each April — due to Proclamation No. 469, which in 2018 designated the month for the celebration — will kick off on April 4 and will feature a variety of activities.

This year's theme is "*Sarap ng Pagkaing Pilipino, Yaman ng Ating Kasaysayan, Kultura, at Pagkatao*" (which roughly translates to "The taste of Filipino food; the wealth of history, culture and self"), was announced at a press conference on March 21 at the Manila Prince Hotel. The new logo for Filipino Food Month was also unveiled, featuring figures of meat, fish, fruit, and vegetables. According to a statement by the Department of Agriculture (DA; one of the agencies in charge of the celebration) says that the new logo "embodies the rich agricultural and culinary heritage of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao by showcasing key agricultural products from each major island group. It is also inspired by the colors of the Philippine flag, symbolizing unity, pride, and resilience in preserving and promoting Filipino cuisine."

Its partner agencies include the Department of Tourism, the National Commission on Culture and the Arts, and the non-government organization, the Philippine Culinary Heritage Movement (PCHM).

Kickoff ceremonies will commence on April 4 at the Quezon Provincial Capitol Grounds.

"This year, we're going down south to Quezon because we also have major food hubs in Quezon," said DA Assistant Secretary for Agribusiness, Marketing, and Consumer Affairs Genevieve Velicaria-Guevarra during the press conference. "Not many people know that most of our vegetables, especially here in Metro Manila — we think it's coming from the north, no — most of them are coming from Quezon... that's what we want to highlight."

She talked about the tangible effects the festival has had on the food industry since debuting in 2019. "This is a form of market linkage, and right after we do this. We (look) for partners."

"We look at it as a form of opening the market and telling them that you can get ingredients here, better, or more premium, ingredients that they can also promote. That's one gauge for us. That's also giving our farmers better income and better opportunities for them to be able to sell their produce," said Ms. Velicaria-Guevarra.

“For our farmers to continue planting, we have to show them that (there is a) market.”

PCHM Founder and President Jose Antonio Miguel Melchor, meanwhile, said that one of the food month’s highlight events, the KAINCON Filipino Food Conference, continues to attract academic papers from here and abroad, saying that there were 60 submissions this year.

The month-long celebration will feature various activities including an official opening ceremony at the DA Central Office and Mines Elementary School in Quezon City on April 7; the Department of Trade and Industry’s National Food Fair: Philippine Cuisine and Ingredients Show at SM Megamall’s Megatrade Hall on April 9; the KAINCON Filipino Food Conference on April 12, and the AngSarap! Philippine Food Festival from April 25 to 27 at Ayala Malls. — **Joseph L. Garcia**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/arts-and-leisure/2025/03/27/661935/national-food-month-kicks-off-in-quezon-province/>

**REMATE:**

# Gobyerno planong magtayo ng bagong housing units, cold storage facilities

March 26, 2025 10:28



MANILA, Philippines – PLANO ng gobyerno na magtayo ng bagong housing units at cold storage facilities sa bansa.

Ito ang ibinahagi ni Presidential Communications Office (PCO) Undersecretary at Palace Press Officer Claire Castro matapos dumalo sa isang sectoral meeting na pinangunahan ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. sa Palasyo ng Malakanyang.

“Kanina po ay nakipag-meeting po tayo para po doon sa mga housing projects at doon sa napakaganda pong mga proyekto po ng Department of Agriculture (DA). So, marami pong pabahay na pinaplano po, at ‘yun pong mga food hubs sa mga cold storage ay nakalinya na rin po iyan,” ang sinabi ni Castro.

“So, iyan po ay, kumbaga, kailangan po na maayos pati budget po sa lahat para po magampanan ng bawat ahensiya iyong kanilang mga proyekto para sa taumbayan,” aniya pa rin.

Hindi naman nagbigay ng karagdagang detalye si Castro sa bagong housing at cold storage projects.



Sa kabilang dako, sa hiwalay na kalatas sa official Facebook page ng PCO, sinabi nito na ipinresenta ni DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. kay Pangulong Marcos ang plano ng departamento para sa cold storage expansion project.

“The proposed establishment of food hubs in strategic locations nationwide was also discussed during the sectoral meeting,” ang sinabi ng PCO.

Naglaan naman ang DA ng P3 billion para sa 99 cold storage facilities para palawigin ang shelf life ng mga prutas, gulay at high-value crops, habang tinitiyak ang katatagan ng presyo at seguridad ng pagkain.

Hangad din nito ang pagtatatag ng food hubs para mapadali ang tuluy-tuloy na pag-access ng mga ‘suppliers at buyers.’ *Kris Jose*

<https://remate.ph/goberno-planong-magtayo-ng-bagong-housing-units-cold-storage-facilities/>

**ABANTE:**

# Price cap sa imported bigas P45/kilo na simula Marso 31

Abante News

- **March 26, 2025**



Ibababa ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang price cap sa imported rice o ang tinatawag na maximum suggested retail price sa P45 per kilo simula Marso 31.

Ayon sa DA, ibinababa ang MSRP dahil patuloy na bumabagsak ang presyo ng bigas sa world market na natutulungan pa ng paglakas ng palitan ng piso kontra dolyar.

Sabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., P19 per kilo na ang binaba ng presyo ng bigas sa retail mula noong Enero. Bago magpatupad ng MSRP sa bigas noong Enero, nasa P64 per kilo ang presyo nito sa retail.

Unang pinatupad ng DA ang MSRP noong Enero 22, anim na buwan matapos pirmahan ang Executive Order No. 62 na nagbaba ng taripa sa bigas sa 15% mula 35%. Bigo itong pababain ang presyo ng bigas ng P6-P7 per kilo tulad ng iginiit ng mga economic manager. Para kay Tiu Laurel, sapat na ang P10 per kilo na patong mula sa mga importer at trader hanggang sa mga retailer para sa makatarungang kita sa lahat.

(Eileen Mencias)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/03/26/price-cap-sa-imported-bigas-p45-kilo-na-simula-marso-31/>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Customs seizes misdeclared sugar

**By Giselle P. Jordan**

**March 27, 2025**

SOME 500 metric tons (MT) of imported goods, labeled "white sweet powder" and worth P30 million, have been held by the Bureau of Customs (BOC) for suspected misdeclaration, Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said.

Shipped from its port of origin in Vietnam, the product arrived in the Philippines through Subic in Zambales.

The items were not declared as sugar, and instead described as "glucose and other materials," Azcona said.

However, this aroused suspicion from BOC authorities, who saw the product content broken down as 88 percent sugar and 12 percent glucose.

Azcona explained that a product is considered sugar if it contains 65 percent of the substance.

The seized goods resembled sugar in its crystallized form, Azcona pointed out, but not imported glucose, which usually comes in liquid form.

The goods are currently undergoing testing at the SRA quarters, as ordered by the BOC, to see whether they are considered sweeteners or "other sugars."

Sugar and other sugars are not of the same category. Section 17 of the 2022 Asean Harmonized Tariff Nomenclature (AHTN) puts sugar under Section 17.01, and "other sugars" under Section 17.02.

The confiscated goods may be intended for resale, Azcona said, explaining that the SRA plans its sugar supply based on local sugar production and that the resale of imported sugar is contrary to its plans.

He added the media will be informed of the results of the testing once ready. If the goods were, indeed, falsely declared, the BOC will impound them, and that the SRA and Department of Agriculture may take other actions.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/27/business/top-business/customs-seizes-misdeclared-sugar/2080754>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Solano group gets cacao facility

**By Leander C. Domingo**

**March 27, 2025**

TO boost the cacao industry in the province of Nueva Vizcaya, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) recently turned over the Enhanced Cacao Processing Center to the Bangaan Agriculture Cooperative (BAC) in Solano.

The P500,000 facility from the DTI Nueva Vizcaya provincial office was implemented through the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program in partnership with the Department of Agrarian Reform. It is located in Solano, where the local government unit (LGU) also gave support.

During the turnover of the facility on March 14, DTI Business Development Division chief Lenore Lee Lopez, representing Acting DTI Provincial Director Ramil Gracia, said the project will enhance cacao processing capabilities and boost local production of the crop.

Lopez also emphasized the importance of continuous improvement in cacao bean production and processing, urging the cooperative to maintain high standards in their operations.

"This initiative underscores the collaborative efforts of government agencies in empowering local cacao farmers, enhancing processing capabilities and driving economic growth in Nueva Vizcaya's cacao sector," she said.

Expressing gratitude on behalf of the cooperative, BAC Manager Amelia Guzman acknowledged the unwavering support of DTI, DAR and the Solano LGU.

Guzman also reaffirmed the cooperative's commitment to strengthening the local cacao industry and inspiring more farmers to engage in cacao farming and production.

Expressing gratitude on behalf of the cooperative, BAC Manager Amelia Guzman acknowledged the unwavering support of DTI, DAR and the Solano LGU.

Guzman also reaffirmed the cooperative's commitment to strengthening the local cacao industry and inspiring more farmers to engage in cacao farming and production.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/27/business/agribusiness/solano-group-gets-cacao-facility/2080672>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Farmers ask Marcos to appoint 'tobacco czar'

**By Bernadette E. Tamayo**

March 27, 2025

THE leader of the country's tobacco growers appealed to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to appoint a "tobacco czar" who will give focus on their plight such as cigarette smuggling.

Saturnino Distor, head of Philippine Tobacco Growers Association of the Philippines, made the appeal as tobacco farmers also want increased funding support from the government and a stop to smuggling of cigarettes.

"I hope they appoint a tobacco czar who will address smuggling here in our country," Distor said in Filipino.

He deplored the proliferation of smuggled cigarettes in the market that affects tobacco growers.

Distor told visiting reporters from Manila that the tobacco czar "must be brave who can face smugglers' groups head on and be able to push for laws for the welfare of farmers."

He also thanked the President for signing into law the anti-smuggling bill.

The Philippine Tobacco Institute (PTI) has expressed support for proposals that will make it more difficult for illegal tobacco traders to operate in the country.

PTI president Jericho Nograles raised the need to address loopholes in curbing illicit tobacco trade, among others.

During a recent Senate hearing on smuggling, the PTI cited several factors that lead to illicit trade.

The PTI said the Philippines' vast coastline (33,300 kilometers) makes it difficult to control smuggling.

The country's proximity to major illicit product suppliers and the high profitability of smuggling are also part of the problem.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/27/business/agribusiness/farmers-ask-marcos-to-appoint-tobacco-czar/2080671>

**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Ilagan promotes food products in Foodex

**By Philippine Information Agency**

**March 27, 2025**

**ILAGAN, Isabela — Isabela province promoted its unique and world-class food products at the prestigious Food Exposition (Foodex) Japan 2025.**



Food producers from Ilagan, Isabela, showcased their products at the Food Exposition Japan 2025 in Tokyo. PIA PHOTO

The locally produced products on display included Big Brothers Cornick by 3 Shers Food Products; Calamansi Juice and Okra Chips by JBM Food Products; Gin-C by Jones Producers Cooperative; Chili Sauce and Adlai Rice by EJ Contreras Food House; and Gourmet Tuyo by KMK Food Products.

Foodex Japan is Asia's largest food and beverage trade show, featuring a wide range of products from various countries across Asia. The 2025 edition was held on March 11 to 14 in Tokyo.

Philippine Ambassador to Japan Mylene Garcia-Albano expressed enthusiasm about the potential impact of the food expo on local food entrepreneurs and the province's economy.

She highlighted the role of international food fairs in creating global opportunities for Isabela's food industry.

"We are thrilled to be here at Foodex Japan 2025, strengthening market linkages and exploring new opportunities for our MSMEs. This event opens doors for Isabela's food industry to expand globally," she said.

Albano also mentioned that the Philippine Embassy in Japan is available to assist Filipino exhibitors at the trade show.

Noting the Philippines' previous participation in the expo, the ambassador said the country's presence at this year's Foodex Japan is significantly larger.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/27/business/agribusiness/ilagan-promotes-food-products-in-foodex/2080668>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# DA eyes P14-B food hubs to bolster farm supply chain

Ada Pelonia  
March 27, 2025



## Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) plans to build two food hubs, worth as much as P14 billion, to bolster the country's supply chain.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said one food hub will be established in Clark, Pampanga, to serve as a market channel for the provinces in North Luzon, while the other will be built in Quezon province to cater to those in Southern Tagalog and Bicol.

Each food hub would need around P3 to P7 billion in funding, according to the DA official.

"In this food hub [...] huge volumes of agricultural produce could be traded daily, and it would have cold storage facilities around it," De Mesa told reporters in Filipino during a press briefing on Wednesday.

"If you have these kinds of facilities, you can at least have a system that will indicate a pricing so that farmers are not affected and consumers do not experience excessively high or low prices," he said.

The agency is eyeing to build the food hub early next year. The hub in Clark will be 30 to 50 hectares, while the one in Quezon will have 20 to 30 hectares.

De Mesa noted that the food hub was aligned with Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.'s vision to have such projects that would prevent the volatility in prices of farm goods.

Last year, Laurel bared his plans to establish food hubs across the country. These will serve as crucial platforms where farmers and cooperatives can directly bring their produce, he explained.

This would facilitate transactions with wholesale buyers and individual consumers while offering agricultural products at competitive prices.

Industry sources have flagged the "disconnect" between the farmgate and retail prices of pork, with the DA imposing a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for pork starting March 10 to curb the spike in prices of the protein source.

The MSRP stood at P380 per kilo for pork belly or liempo and P350 per kilo for kasim or pork shoulder and pigue or pork ham. Sabit ulo, or the price at which traders pass pork to retailers, also had an MSRP of P300 per kilo.

Retail prices of pork ham in Metro Manila markets range from P320 to P420 per kilo, while pork belly stood between P370 and P470 per kilo, based on the latest government price monitoring report.

Image credits: [PNA/Ben Briones](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/27/da-eyes-p14-b-food-hubs-to-bolster-farm-supply-chain/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **As global rice prices dip, da cuts MSRP to P45 a kilo**

Ada Pelonia  
March 27, 2025

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) will again cut the maximum suggested retail price for imported rice to P45 per kilo starting March 31, owing to a steady decline in global quotations of the staple grain.

“At this level, the retail price of imported rice has now decreased by P19 per kilo compared to its price before we implemented the MSRP on January 20,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement.

The agency said that before the implementation of the MSRP, imported rice was sold at P64 per kilo despite the softening of international rice prices, tariff reductions, and a stronger peso.

According to the DA, the MSRP implementation followed consultations with industry stakeholders to ensure that price reductions would not destabilize the rice industry or compromise food security.

The agency noted that the initiative reflects President Marcos Jr.’s decision to slash rice tariffs to 15 percent from 35 percent. It added that India’s decision to lift its ban on the export of non-basmati rice also contributed to the increase in global rice supply.

As a result, the DA said international rice prices dropped to their lowest levels in over two years, with some varieties settling below \$380 per metric ton (MT).

Before the MSRP reduction to P49 per kilo on March 1, the DA said the price of rice with 5 percent broken grains in Vietnam had already dropped to \$490 per MT, around \$200 cheaper than in December. Vietnam is the Philippines’s top supplier of rice.

The DA said the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) recognized the MSRP as a “key factor” in reducing rice prices and helping tame inflation.

## **Purchase local rice**

The agency 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.

Laurel 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 that since it was stripped of its regulatory powers, the grains agency has been grappling with a limited budget, hampering it from purchasing “significant” volumes from farmers and managing rice inventories through regular sales to the public.

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.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/27/as-global-rice-prices-dip-da-cuts-msrp-to-p45-a-kilo/>



**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **Palace backs DA call to strengthen NFA authority to buy more palay**

Samuel P. Medenilla  
March 27, 2025

MALACAÑANG on Wednesday backed the calls of the Department of Agriculture (DA) to provide more power to the National Food Authority (NFA) so it can buy more palay from local farmers and stabilize the price of rice.

In a press briefing, Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said the proposal is expected to help address the apparent flaws of Republic Act 12078 or the amended Rice Tariffication Act.

Castro noted that currently NFA is mandated to coordinate with local governments in its mandate to buy palay from farmers and sell its old rice stocks to government agencies and the public through Kadiwa stores. “They will first go through the local government, that is what is becoming a bit of a problem or an issue for the Department of Agriculture,” Castro said in Filipino.

“I hope Congress can study again the Rice Tariffication Act so that it can be fixed and the NFA can be given proper authority,” she added when asked if the Marcos administration will include the proposal to its priority legislation.

Under RA 12078, which amended RA 11203, NFA may only sell existing rice buffer stock in areas where there is a rice supply shortage or an extraordinary increase in rice prices.

Prior to the passage of RA 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), the NFA had the sole authority when it came to rice and the importation of the local food staple.

Its power became limited to maintaining an emergency rice buffer stock with the passage of the RTL in 2019.

On Monday, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel Jr. called on Congress to give the agency additional resources so it can buy 20 percent of local rice to help it influence the price of the local food staple.

Castro agreed to the said proposal of providing the additional power to NFA so it can bring down the price of rice.

“It would be great if the NFA could be given authority again, because it has really lost the power to import rice,” Castro said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/27/palace-backs-da-call-to-strengthen-nfa-authority-to-buy-more-palay/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **SRA, UTokyo seal pact on sugar research**

Ada Pelonia

March 27, 2025

The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) and the University of Tokyo (UTokyo) forged an agreement which seeks to increase domestic sugarcane output and strengthen the industry.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said the memorandum of understanding (MOU) that will run for three years would cover major aspects aimed at helping the domestic sugarcane industry, including the development of higher-yielding varieties and more efficient milling practices.

“We will also tackle the side of bioethanol (such as) how to efficiently extract more biofuels from our sugarcane. This will come both in sugarcane juice and molasses,” Azcona told reporters in a press briefing on Tuesday.

He said the MOU includes initiatives related to value-adding as other products may be produced from sugarcane.

In particular, the SRA chief said the Japanese counterpart could produce carbide, biochar, and sustainable aviation fuel from sugarcane production.

“So, those (are the things) they will share with us.”

Azcona said the local sugarcane industry could learn from its Japanese counterpart, which produces 70 metric tons (MT) per hectare. The size of Japan’s sugarcane plantation is smaller at 22,000 hectares.

The Philippines’ sugarcane industry has a total of 388,000 hectares, with an average production of 50 MT per hectare.

Meanwhile, the SRA chief noted that the industry also has ongoing research efforts with the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS).

He said the JIRCAS had already brought into the country a variety that the research institute bred for the Philippines, which they believe “will work in our situation.”

The variety is already growing in the agency’s La Granja Agricultural Research and Extension Center in La Carlota City, Negros Occidental.

He noted that the variety’s biggest advantage is its resistance to climate change, noting that the areas where the Japanese would plant their sugarcane were “very windy” and “susceptible to typhoon.”

“They bred a variety that had a very strong root system and was resilient to dry and wet climate. That’s one of the things we want to learn.”

Last month, the SRA said it is hopeful that the country will be able to produce 1.78 million metric tons (MMT) of raw sugar in the current crop year despite the decline in sugar content.

Data from the SRA showed that as of February 16, sugarcane production reached 13.07 MMT, 18.16 percent lower than the 15.98 MMT recorded in the previous year.

Despite this, the decline in sugarcane milled was smaller compared to the 27.75-percent drop last January 12.

However, yield for sugarcane shrank by 11 percent to an average of 1.58 LKGTC (50-kilo bag per ton of cane) from 1.78 LKGTC a year earlier, based on SRA data.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/27/sra-utokyo-seal-pact-on-sugar-research/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **Govt aims to expand duck production via new program**

Ada Pelonia  
March 27, 2025

The Department of Agriculture (DA) introduced a feed distribution program to support duck raisers in Pampanga, considered a central hub in the country's duck industry.

Under this initiative, registered duck raisers in the Registry System for Basic Sector in Agriculture (RSBSA) can receive between nine and 17 bags of feeds weighing 50 kilos each. The financial support ranges from P15,000 to P28,000 per recipient, it added.

However, the DA said duck raisers should own a minimum of 100 ducks to qualify, with the program capping assistance at 2,000 ducks, regardless of the number registered in the RSBSA.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the initiative will be fine-tuned to make it a multi-year program and expand its coverage to other parts of the country.

“Though small, this feed distribution initiative aims to provide vital support to our Kabalen in the duck industry, who are working tirelessly to help the government achieve its vision of a food-secure Philippines and an agricultural sector where farmers can earn better and improve their lives,” he said in a statement.

The DA noted that about 1,000 duck raisers from the fourth district of Pampanga will benefit from this initiative, designed to help stabilize the industry and boost productivity. These include raisers from Candaba, San Luis, San Simon, and Apalit.

It added that the program is part of the agency's broader efforts to enhance livestock farming, particularly poultry such as ducks, providing more income-generating opportunities for farmers while also enhancing food security.

Recognizing the challenges faced by duck raisers, particularly the rising costs of feed ingredients, the DA has also introduced several support measures for the industry.

These include free avian influenza testing, feed assistance, and post-harvest facilities to ensure the sector's continued growth.

The DA chief said the expected commercial availability of the bird flu vaccine in the country later this year should help address a health risk to Pampanga's poultry population, including ducks and quail.

The agency noted that Central Luzon, which is home to more than half of the country's duck population, has consistently been a leader in duck meat and egg production, contributing 27 percent of the national supply of duck meat and 56 percent of duck eggs.

In 2024, the region recorded a total duck inventory of 4.9 million heads, with Pampanga alone accounting for nearly 60 percent of the total, it added.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/27/govt-aims-to-expand-duck-production-via-new-program/>

**MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT:**

# **DA to lower imported rice price to P45/kilo by March 31**

*By Jed Macapagal*

March 27, 2025

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said it will lower the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of imported rice to P45 per kilogram by March 31 from the current P49 per kg, following continued declines in global rice prices.

“At this level, the retail price of imported rice has now decreased by P19 per kg compared to its price before we implemented the MSRP on January 20,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement released to reporters on Wednesday.

Before the MSRP was introduced, imported rice sold for P64 per kg despite global rice prices softening, tariff reductions and a strong performance of the Philippine peso, the DA said.

The agency reiterated that the implementation of the rice MSRP followed consultations with industry stakeholders to ensure that price reductions would not destabilize the local rice industry nor compromise food security.

Based on the DA’s monitoring of public markets in the National Capital Region, local well-milled rice sold for P40 to P54 per kg on Tuesday (March 25), while regular milled rice went for P35 to P48 per kg.

Imported well-milled rice was selling for P43 to P46 per kg, while prices of imported regular milled rice ranged from P35 to P45 per kg.

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

Special-variety local rice was selling for P53 to P64 per kg while premium rice went for P43 to P62 per kg.

## *Feed support for duck raisers*

In a separate announcement, the DA said it has launched a feed distribution initiative aimed at supporting duck raisers in Pampanga, considered the central hub of the country’s duck industry.

Tiu Laurel said the initiative has been part of broader efforts to strengthen livestock farming, particularly poultry like ducks, to provide more income-generating opportunities for farmers and enhance food security. Central Luzon is home to over half of the nation’s duck population and has consistently been a leader in both duck meat and egg production, contributing 27 percent of the national supply of duck meat and 56 percent of duck eggs, the latest DA data showed.

The agency said that in 2024, the region recorded a total duck inventory of 4.9 million heads, with Pampanga alone accounting for nearly 60 percent of the total.

Under the feed assistance program, registered duck raisers in the Registry System for Basic Sector in Agriculture (RSBSA) can receive between nine and 17 bags of feeds, each weighing 50 kg, with the actual amount of support ranging from P15,000 to P28,000 per recipient.

To qualify for the program, duck raisers must own at least 100 ducks, and government assistance will cover a maximum of 2,000 ducks, regardless of the number registered in the RSBSA, the DA explained.

Nearly 1,000 duck raisers from the fourth district of Pampanga, including those from Candaba, San Luis, San Simon and Apalit, will benefit from this initiative, which is being fine-tuned to become a multi-year program that can be expanded to other parts of the country, the DA said.

“Though small, this feed distribution initiative aims to provide vital support to our Kabalen in the duck industry, who are working tirelessly to help the government achieve its vision of a food-secure Philippines and an agricultural sector where farmers can earn better and improve their lives,” said Tiu Laurel

<https://malaya.com.ph/business/corporate/da-to-lower-imported-rice-price-to-p45-kilo-by-march-31/>

**MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT:**

# DA keen on setting up food hubs nationwide

By *Jed Macapagal*

March 27, 2025

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has proposed to President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., the setting up of food hubs in major trade corridors nationwide.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel proposed a nationwide network of food hubs to President Marcos Jr. on Tuesday after visiting the successful food hubs in Thailand recently, DA spokesperson Arnel de Mesa told reporters in a briefing in Quezon City, on Wednesday.

“Yesterday (Tuesday), we were in Malacañang and the President initially agreed on these concepts.”

So far, the development of food hub facilities in Clark and Quezon Province is in the early stages, De Mesa said.

“The one in Clark will serve North Luzon and the one in Quezon Province will serve Southern Tagalog and Bicol. And then, there will also be some sort of similar projects in Luzon, in Visayas and Mindanao,” De Mesa explained. “That’s the initial target. The food hub will be like the experience of Thailand.”

The DA official said Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel has advocated these projects as long-term solutions to the problems of local agricultural logistics and supply availability.

“This is something the secretary has seen in Thailand. That country has 20 of these food hubs that measure somewhere between 50 and 80 hectares... These can carry big volumes of vegetables and meat and every agricultural produce that can be traded everyday, and these will also have cold storages and all support infrastructures,” De Mesa said.

The DA said such facilities would help prevent sharp fluctuations in the prices of local agricultural goods.

“So, if you have this kind of facility, then you can have at least a system, which can tell you the right pricing of goods. With this, we will also not experience super high prices or extreme deficiency of products,” De Mesa explained.

However, De Mesa could not categorically say when the proposal for food hubs in Visayas and Mindanao would undergo feasibility studies, be contracted and break ground, but these have drawn the interest of President Marcos.

The agency earlier sent a local delegation to Thailand during the last week of February until March 2, to explore best practices, techniques and systems in farming, product development and agricultural supply chain management.

The DA had said its delegation also discussed bilateral trade opportunities and potential Thai investments in Philippine agriculture, with Thai counterparts and the private sector.

Among private sector commitments secured by the DA during the Thailand trip, were the planned establishment of a food processing facility and distribution network in the Philippines by Thai food and agri-industrial giant Charoen Pokphand Foods PLC (CPF) within the next three years, the DA said.

CPF is a company under Thailand’s Charoen Pokphand Group Co. Ltd., a conglomerate which also signed a partnership with the Maharlika Investment Corp. last month, to establish a private equity fund and raise up to \$1 billion to accelerate investment in agriculture and food production, digital innovation and sustainable energy in the Philippines.

<https://malaya.com.ph/business/corporate/da-keen-on-setting-up-food-hubs-nationwide/>

**MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT:**

# Palace agrees to restore NFA power to import rice

By *Jocelyn Montemayor*  
March 27, 2025

Malacañang has expressed support for the restoration of the National Food Authority's (NFA) function to import rice, which, it said, should enable it to better respond to the needs of the market and farmers.

The move stemmed from a previous proposal by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel to restore the importation powers of NFA and to review the Rice Tariffication Act during a congressional hearing on the high prices of rice.

The NFA lost its authority to import rice and sell it directly to the public when the Rice tariffication Act was passed in 2019. It currently has to go through local government units (LGUs) to act on rice importation needs, to buy palay from the farmers and sell the grains to the public.

“Maganda sana po kung mabigyan muli ng authority ang NFA kasi nawalan po talaga sila ng power para po umangkat ng bigas. Sa ngayon po, lahat ng gagawin ng NFA dapat munang dumaan sa LGU (It would be better if the NFA could be authorized again to directly import rice. At present, everything they do must go through the LGUs),” Communications Undersecretary Claire Castro said in a press briefing at Malacañang on Wednesday.

Castro said she hopes Congress would act on the appeal to empower the NFA.

<https://malaya.com.ph/business/corporate/palace-agrees-to-restore-nfa-power-to-import-rice/>

**ABANTE TONITE:**

## **DA inalarma sa bagsak-presyong palay**

**March 26, 2025**

**Nagbabanta ang patuloy na pagbagsak ng presyo ng palay dahil bumababa ang halaga ng imported na bigas na pumapasok sa bansa.**

Ayon sa Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), P24 per kilo na lamang ang landed cost ng imported Vietnamese rice na 5% broken.

Ibababa ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang maximum suggested retail price ng imported rice sa P45 per kilo sa Marso 31 dahil bumababa na ang presyo ng bigas sa world market. Nakatulong din ang paglakas ng palitan ng piso laban sa dolyar sa pagpapababa ng presyo ng imported rice.

“Palay traders are probably anticipating that the prices of imported rice will continue to fall, so they are playing safe by buying low from farmers,” sabi ni FFF Chairman Leonardo Montemayor.

Kinumpirma ng DA na sumadsad na sa P14 per kilo ang farmgate price ng palay.

Magkaugnay ang presyo ng palay sa presyo ng bigas. Kapag nagmamahal ang palay, tumataas din ang presyo ng bigas. Nagmumura rin ang palay kung nagiging mura ang presyo ng bigas dahil sa dagsa ng imported rice.

Binatikos ng FFF ang DA dahil sa wala umano itong masyadong ginagawa para tulungan ang mga magsasaka ngayong panahon ng anihan. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/03/26/da-inalarma-sa-bagsak-presyong-palay/>



**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:**

# **DA: P45 kada kilo MSRP sa imported rice simula sa Lunes**

Angie dela Cruz

March 27, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Simula sa Lunes, Marso 31, nasa P45 per kilo ang maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) ng imported rice dahil sa patuloy na pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas sa merkado.

“At this level, the retail price of imported rice has now decreased by P19 per kilo compared to its price before we implemented the MSRP on January 20,” sabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel.

Bago maitakda ang MSRP, ang imported rice ay naibebenta sa halagang P64 kada kilo kahit na bumaba ang global rice prices, nagkaroon ng tariff reductions at lumakas ang piso.

Ang implementasyon ng MSRP ay pinatupad makaraan ang konsultasyon ng DA sa industry stakeholders para matiyak ang pagbabawas sa presyo ng bigas ay hindi pipilay sa rice industry at makokompormiso ang seguridad sa pagkain sa bansa.

Bago naipatupad ang MSRP na P49 per kilo sa mga imported rice noong Marso 1, ang presyo ng magandang uri ng bigas mula Vietnam na may 5 percent broken grains ay bumaba sa USD 490 per metric ton.

Ang Vietnam ang main source ng imported rice sa Pilipinas.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/metro/2025/03/27/2431356/da-p45-kada-kilo-msrp-sa-imported-rice-simula-sa-lunes>