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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **DA pushes for solar-powered ice plants to reduce spoilage of goods**

**BY DEXTER BARRO II**

Mar 3, 2025 05:30 AM

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The Department of Agriculture (DA) is looking into establishing a network of solar-powered ice plants across the country to minimize spoilage and post-harvest losses in agricultural and fishery products.

In a statement on Saturday, March 1, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said this initiative is part of the agency's vow to improve food supply efficiency while increasing necessary support for farmers and fisherfolk.

"By introducing ice early in the supply chain—from farm to storage, or even directly to market—we can extend the shelf life of produce," said Laurel.

The DA chief noted that the spoilage rate of high-value crops such as fruits and vegetables, as well as fishery products and livestock, is between 35 percent and 40 percent.

By introducing more ice plants, these crops can preserve their freshness and overall value, which is vital in generating a more substantial profit.

As part of the government's ongoing drive to reduce carbon commissions, the DA wants these proposed ice plants to be powered by renewable energy sources like solar and battery systems.

Ideally, each plant should have a daily production capacity of around 10 metric tons (MT) of ice.

Laurel said the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), both agencies under the DA, could provide the funding for these ice plants.

Apart from reducing spoilage, he said having these facilities could further expand the market reach of local farmers and fisherfolk.

"Currently, many farmers are limited to selling locally, but with the added benefit of ice, they could potentially extend their market reach across the archipelago," Laurel stressed.

Moreover, these ice plants can easily be integrated with existing infrastructure such as food terminals and digital tracking systems to strengthen the logistics of goods in the country.

The Agriculture Secretary said improving the management and distribution of day-to-day commodities would ensure better prices for consumers.

Two weeks ago, the DA's Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech) inaugurated a ₱3.9 million solar-powered ice block machine in the coastal town of Pilar, Cebu.

The machine was designed to provide a sustainable and cost-efficient ice supply for preserving the town's fish products and other perishable goods.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/3/da-pushes-for-solar-powered-ice-plants-to-reduce-spoilage-of-goods>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Shortfall in rice tariff collection seen to impact fiscal balance

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#) - The Philippine Star

March 3, 2025 | 12:00am



Imported rice is unloaded at a port in Manila.

STAR / Fil

MANILA, Philippines — A foreseen shortfall in the rice tariff collections this year may further strain the government’s already limited fiscal space, potentially increasing its reliance on borrowings next year to sustain rice programs, experts warned.

Former agriculture undersecretary Fermin Adriano said that if rice tariffs remain at a record low of 15 percent this year, then the government faces a “deficit problem” in 2026 since collections this year might fall short of the minimum P30 billion for the rice competitiveness enhancement fund (RCEF).

Rice tariffs collected each year are earmarked by the government to bankroll the RCEF, aimed at improving the local rice industry’s competitiveness.

However, in the event that rice tariffs collected fall below P30 billion, the deficiency would be sourced from the regular budget of the Department of Agriculture (DA), under the amended Rice Tariffication Law.

This, experts noted, could pose a problem to the overall budget of the DA since it would mean that some programs of the department might face an allocation cut to fill in the deficiency in the guaranteed RCEF.

“(The National Rice Program) will most likely be adversely affected because of substantial overlap with RCEF assistance,” Adriano noted.

He pointed out that the budget from slow disbursing programs of the DA might also be taken away to fill in the possible gap in RCEF allocation next year.

Adriano noted that the absorptive capacity of the DA has averaged below 80 percent in recent years.

“In short, there should be no problem if the DA budget is managed properly,” he said.

Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. president Danilo Fausto said the rice tariff collection shortfall would add more burden to the government's fiscal space. This, he said, could lead to the government jacking up its borrowing program next year just to sustain its key programs.

"It will have to compete with the regular fund of other programs of the government," Fausto said.

Industry players earlier noted that rice imports must increase by at least half or even double this year for the government to collect P30 billion in tariffs if the rate would be kept at 15 percent throughout the year.

Last year, the government collected a record high of P34 billion in rice tariffs. The reduced rice tariff rate took effect only at the start of the second half.

If the entire 4.8 million metric tons of rice imported last year had been slapped with a 15-percent tariff, the government's collections would have been just around P20.8 billion, or P9.2 billion short of the P30-billion RCEF.

Raul Montemayor of the Federation of Free Farmers agreed that funding for the RCEF may start to rise beginning in 2026 since tariff collections starting this year may not reach P30 billion annually. With this, the RCEF would have to depend on savings in the DA budget or even on unprogrammed funds, Montemayor said.

"In this case, it will be very hard for implementing agencies to plan and prepare if they do not know if their funding will come or not and how much it will be," he said.

The government's rice tariff collections in January plunged by 70 percent on an annual basis because of lower tariff rates and a decline in import arrivals.

Bureau of Customs data showed that it collected P1.43 billion in rice tariffs last month, P3.31 billion lower than the P4.74 billion recorded in the same period last year.

Rice import volume in January fell by more than a quarter to 330,501 metric tons from 474,194 MT in the same month last year.

Last month, the DA requested President Marcos to restore the P10 billion in its national rice program (NRP) budget after it was slashed in the 2025 General Appropriations Act (GAA) because of the hike in the RCEF.

The NRP, a banner program of the DA aimed at supporting local rice farmers, had a proposed budget of P31.4 billion under the 2025 National Expenditure Program (NEP), slightly higher than the P30.88 billion allocation in 2024.

However, the program only received P21.68 billion in the 2025 GAA. The DA noted that the reduction in the NRP budget could be because of the increase in the guaranteed allocation for the RCEF to P30 billion from P10 billion.

"We are seeking an additional P9 to P10 billion for the rice program. And it would depend on the Department of Budget and Management where they will source the fund," Agriculture assistant secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa earlier said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/03/03/2425371/shortfall-rice-tariff-collection-seen-impact-fiscal-balance>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# ‘LGUs need more support for irrigation systems’

[Delon Porcalla](#) - The Philippine Star

March 3, 2025 | 12:00am



**“We need to put more money into our irrigation.**

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — While skyscraper-filled Makati City has no agricultural lands, this does not mean that outgoing Mayor Abby Binay – now running for a Senate seat – cannot appreciate the necessity of having a good irrigation system that can help grow palay in the countryside.

“We need to put more money into our irrigation. Imagine the potential of those lands for us to achieve food security and not rely on the importation of food,” Binay, a senatorial candidate of President Marcos’ Alyansa para sa Bagong Pilipinas, said at a press briefing in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan on Friday.

She said a significant portion of the country’s agricultural potential remains untapped due to inadequate irrigation systems, and cited a statement from Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. that over a million hectares of flatland remain unirrigated.

“Clearly, the support we are giving is not enough, especially in key areas... I believe we should begin with the most basic necessity, which is irrigation,” she said.

Investing in irrigation will enhance productivity, reduce dependency on food imports and secure the nation’s long-term food supply, she added.

## **MRT-7 to usher better business**

Speaking at the same press briefing, House Deputy Speaker and Alyansa senatorial candidate Camille Villar underscored the need for the ongoing Metro Rail Transit-7 – the railway to connect Quezon City to San Jose del Monte in Bulacan – to be completed soon, so that more economic activities will happen in the area.

Villar cited, for example, how the MRT-7 would bolster development and bring in new business, which in turn could open up new job opportunities.

The MRT-7 line is a 22.8-kilometer railway system that runs in a northeast–southwest direction, beginning at San Jose del Monte, Bulacan up to the North Triangle Common Station in North Avenue, Quezon City.

**Food SRP tags**

Another Alyansa senatorial bet, Rep. Erwin Tulfo, said food items should also bear the government’s mandatory suggested retail price tag to prevent unscrupulous businessmen from abusing consumers, especially those who may not have any idea how much an item really costs.

Tulfo said the Department of Agriculture can place suggested retail prices on basic food items with prices that are always rising such as rice, chicken, pork, fish, vegetables and other commodities.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/03/03/2425416/lgus-need-more-support-irrigation-systems>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# DA: Max SRP for imported rice may drop further

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

March 3, 2025 | 12:00am



A rice vendor sells his products to customers at Paco Market in Manila on February 1, 2025.

STAR / Noel Pabalate

MANILA, Philippines — The maximum suggested retail price on imported rice can go lower than the recently implemented SRP of P49 per kilo, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said over the weekend.

“That (max SRP of P49 per kilo) can still go down. Of course, the cost of imported rice in the international market will have a big effect,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said in a radio interview.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the landed cost of five-percent broken imported rice dropped to \$490 per metric ton on Feb. 21, from \$550 per metric ton.

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 before it went down to P49 per kilo last Saturday.

At the same time, De Mesa admitted that it will be difficult to bring down the retail price of rice to P33 per kilo.

“We were able to bring down the price in Kadiwa outlets and National Food Authority (NFA) but with a little subsidy. At present, it is still difficult to reach that level in the markets but we think it is possible if we can continue to bring down the cost of production (of local farmers),” he said.

On the other hand, De Mesa said that the DA is still pushing for the return of the regular functions of the NFA to sell rice in the markets amid the difficulty of the agency to dispose of its stocks despite the declaration of food emergency.

“This is our limitation, if the warehouses are full, the NFA cannot procure palay as it cannot store the new stocks. We continue to ask the LGUs to facilitate the procurement of rice as the NFA has very



limited options in relation to the disposal of its stocks. It only has the opportunity to release its stocks to participating LGUs because of the food emergency,” De Mesa added. According to De Mesa, more than 70 LGUs vowed to participate in the procurement of NFA rice but only a few mayors bought stocks from the NFA.

### **Rice imports**

The country’s rice imports for the first two months have reached 414,137 metric tons (MT), according to the Bureau of Plant Industry.

Based on BPI data, 71 percent or 293,084 MT of the total rice imports from Jan. 1 to Feb. 20, came from Vietnam.

Other sources of outsourced grains include Pakistan, 55,469 MT; Thailand, 47,965 MT; Myanmar, 10,795 MT; India, 4,823 MT; and South Korea, 2,000 MT.

Last year, the total rice imports reached an “all-time-high” of 4.8 million MT.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/03/03/2425439/da-max-srp-imported-rice-may-drop-further>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Agri agency sues Cavite importer over onion shipment

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)  
[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:40 AM March 03, 2025

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) has filed a complaint against Chastity Consumer Goods Trading for allegedly misdeclaring imported onions as processed food.

In a statement over the weekend, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said the BPI lodged the complaint before the Olongapo City Prosecutor's Office for violating the Food Safety Act and the Plant Quarantine Law of 1978.

It named Chastity Consumer Goods Trading's owner and president Lina Bang Talan as a respondent in the case.

Aside from not being a registered BPI importer, the complaint also said that Chastity Consumer Goods Trading lacks the necessary sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC) for importing the goods.

Traders are required by law to secure the SPSIC to ensure that imported agricultural commodities are safe for human consumption and to prevent the spread of harmful pests that could threaten local crops and ecosystems.

"The complaint highlighted the risk posed by the misdeclaration, noting that the absence of proper permits and inspections could potentially endanger public health and safety," the DA said.

The BPI filed the complaint as local authorities inspected two container vans of imported goods that arrived at the Port of Subic last August, which were consigned to Chastity Consumer Goods Trading, whose headquarters are located in Cavite province, based on its registration with the Food and Drug Administration.

"The goods were declared as frozen fish egg balls, a processed food item not under the jurisdiction of the BPI," the DA said.

"However, upon inspection, the containers yielded thousands of cartons of yellow onions, which are subject to the DA-BPI's regulations," it added.

Carmela Rivera, area manager of BPI-National Plant Quarantine Services Division at the Port of Subic, said authorities initiated the inspection after receiving "derogatory information" implying that the shipments might contain undeclared agricultural products.

The inspection carried out by BPI and Bureau of Customs (BOC) officials and other port authorities confirmed that containers had yellow onions along with frozen fish eggs.

The BOC seized a total of 6,395 stacks of yellow onions, which contained high levels of microbiological contaminants, including E. coli, making them unsafe for human consumption, based on tests conducted by BPI.

Under the Food Safety Act, penalties include a fine of P50,000 to P500,000, suspension or revocation of appropriate authorization to operate a business and imprisonment.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2039746/agri-agency-sues-cavite-importer-over-onion-shipment>

# Food security and the 2025 elections



BY **REX L. NAVARRO**  
MARCH 3, 2025



[Beyond surveys: Why voters prioritize economic needs over politics?](#)

On Feb. 3, 2025, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. declared a rice emergency in response to the extraordinary rise in local rice prices despite lower global market prices and a reduction in tariffs. The emergency declaration allows the National Food Authority (NFA) to release at least 25,000 metric tons of rice per month, totaling 300,000 metric tons, in a bid to bring rice prices down to pre-July 2023 levels.

This situation highlights a stark reality: food security, particularly in the rice sector, remains a pressing issue in the Philippines. The global rice market may be stabilizing, but domestic food prices are still high, affecting the daily lives of millions of Filipinos. While the NFA has launched a rice release program to stabilize prices, local government units (LGUs) have yet to massively heed the call to accelerate their procurement and distribution efforts. This delayed response raises an important question: Why are LGUs so crucial in ensuring food security and how can voters make a difference in this ongoing crisis?

Beyond the immediate emergency measures, the long-term success of food security initiatives relies heavily on the effective involvement of LGUs. Local officials have the knowledge and proximity to address the unique challenges and needs of their communities. They are more than just implementers of national policies—they are leaders in shaping food security at the grassroots level.

LGUs play a pivotal role in ensuring that national agricultural policies are tailored to local conditions. They can develop targeted strategies for agricultural sustainability and support local farmers directly. By empowering communities to take part in food security initiatives, LGUs foster a sense of responsibility and co-ownership which are essential for long-term solutions.

However, the challenge goes beyond just implementing national programs—it also involves spearheading these at the grassroots level. Way back in 2018, the Department of Agriculture encouraged LGUs to develop local food security plans, which could serve as the foundation for future government initiatives. This was a strategic move, especially now that a new rice industry development road map is being mapped out.

As we approach the 2025 elections, it's vital that local officials build on these plans, ensuring that they are not only aligned with national policies but also responsive to the unique challenges faced by their communities. As food security continues to be a critical issue, it should be a central focus in the upcoming elections. The events surrounding the rice emergency serve as a wake-up call—food

security is not just a national concern, but one that requires active, informed leadership at the local level.

Electing leaders who understand the importance of agriculture in both the economic and social fabric of the Philippines is crucial. These leaders will ensure that agricultural policies are not just implemented but also optimized to benefit the people they serve. Their support for smart farming practices, local food production, and targeted food security programs can help safeguard the country's sovereignty and national security. Local officials who are committed to agriculture and food security can create an environment where farming thrives, where food is affordable and accessible, and where rural communities are empowered to play a significant role in shaping their own future.

A country that relies heavily on food imports is vulnerable to disruptions in global markets, whether due to geopolitical conflicts, natural disasters, or shifting supply chains. By electing officials who reduce dependency on imported food, Filipino voters can help ensure that the Philippines is better prepared for future challenges.

The rice emergency is just one example of why food security must be a flagship issue in the upcoming elections. Local officials who support agriculture are key to ensuring that the Philippines can provide food for its citizens now and in the future. By prioritizing food security in the election process, voters will play a crucial role in shaping a future where agriculture and food security are integral to the nation's prosperity.

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*Dr. Rex L. Navarro is the Vice-President of the Coalition for Agriculture Modernization in the Philippines.*

<https://plus.inquirer.net/opinion/food-security-and-the-2025-elections/>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

## House to take steps on vegetable prices

By: [Jeannette I. Andrade](#) - Reporter / [@jiandradeINQ](#)  
Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:25 AM March 03, 2025



INQUIRER.net photo

MANILA, Philippines — Speaker Martin Romualdez on Sunday assured that the House of Representatives would focus on measures to make vegetable prices affordable, reiterating the importance of investing in farm infrastructure to minimize postharvest losses and stabilize supplies.

The Leyte lawmaker underscored the importance of ensuring locally produced vegetables reach markets efficiently to lessen dependence on imports.

The head of the 300-member chamber said in Filipino, “We shouldn’t only focus on rice but also on vegetables,” adding, “We need to make sure that every Filipino has sufficient affordable and nutritious food on the table.”

Romualdez noted a volatility in vegetable prices that places additional strain on household budgets, especially for low-income families who rely on vegetables as a major part of their diet.

He identified the root causes of high vegetable prices, including poor agricultural infrastructure, inefficient farm-to-market transport, and the lack of postharvest facilities.

According to the Speaker investing in agricultural infrastructure was key to reducing vegetable prices, citing ongoing efforts by the Department of Agriculture to improve farm-to-market roads and storage facilities, which could help minimize postharvest losses and stabilize supplies.

Romualdez further stressed the importance of reducing the country's dependence on imported farm products, saying in Filipino, "We need to strengthen our own produce. If imported vegetables would flood the market, how would our farmers fare? The solution is not importation, but boosting our own production."

He also pushed for greater investment in modernizing farming techniques and farmer support, including expanded access to high-quality seeds, fertilizer subsidies and financial assistance, to enhance local vegetable yield.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2039756/house-to-take-steps-on-vegetable-prices>

## BUSINESS WORLD:

# Poll: Inflation likely eased in February

March 3, 2025 | 12:33 am



**A WORKER unloads sacks of rice on Dagupan Street in Manila, Feb. 27. The Department of Agriculture lowered the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of 5% broken imported rice to P49 per kilo, starting March 1. — PHILIPPINE STAR/RYAN BALDEMOR**

By **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**, *Reporter*

HEADLINE INFLATION likely slowed in February amid the decline in prices of rice and other key commodities, analysts said.

A *BusinessWorld* poll of 18 analysts conducted last week yielded a median estimate of 2.6% for the February consumer price index (CPI). This was within the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' (BSP) 2.2%-3% forecast for the month.

If realized, February inflation would be slower than the 2.9% in January and the 3.4% clip in the same month in 2023.

This would also be the lowest monthly print in four months or since the 2.3% recorded in October.

The Philippine Statistics Authority is scheduled to release February inflation data on Wednesday (March 5).

“Upward price pressures for the month include higher electricity rates and oil prices, and an increase in the prices of key agricultural commodities such as fish and meat,” the BSP said in a statement.

However, these were likely offset by lower prices of rice, fruits, and vegetables as well as negative base effects, it added.

“Softer gasoline and diesel prices, weaker US dollar, easing electricity and rice prices will act as an offset to broad food prices from a year ago,” Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion, chief economist at Union Bank of the Philippines (UnionBank), said.

Easing rice prices likely caused the CPI to go down this month, analysts said.

“(Our) February inflation forecast is at 2.6% due to falling rice prices as a result of additional supply in the market due to the declaration of the food security emergency,” Reinielle Matt M. Erece, economist at Oikonomia Advisory and Research, Inc., said.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) last month declared a food security emergency on rice, which allowed the National Food Authority (NFA) to release buffer stocks at subsidized prices. Local government units can buy NFA rice at P33 per kilo and sell it to the public at P35 per kilo.

On Feb. 15, the DA also lowered the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of 5% broken imported rice to P52 per kilo from P55 previously. This was further slashed to P49 per kilo, starting March 1.



“The biggest driver of the deceleration was likely rice. Not only were there favorable base effects on rice, but rice prices fell on a month-on-month basis,” Aris D. Dacanay, economist for ASEAN at HSBC Global Research, said.

Chinabank Research said the slowdown in inflation in February was mainly driven by lower prices of rice as well as vegetables.

Meanwhile, Mr. Dacanay said retail fuel prices began easing in February amid falling global prices.

In February, pump price adjustments stood at a net decrease of P0.05 a liter for diesel and P0.90 a liter for kerosene. However, gasoline had a net increase of P2.1 a liter.

“Further, world oil prices are on a downtrend, and while a slight increase in domestic energy prices is observed, we expect that prices overall will stabilize,” Mr. Erece said.

Meanwhile, ANZ Research said utilities and transport inflation likely eased year on year in February due to favorable base effects.

Pantheon Macroeconomics Chief Emerging Asia Economist Miguel Chanco also noted a “softening in inflation in housing and utilities, transport and restaurant and accommodation services.”

The stronger peso during the month could also tame inflation, analysts said.

“The peso exchange rate appreciated against the US dollar so far in February versus in recent months, the strongest for the peso in nearly two months,” Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Chief Economist Michael L. Ricafort said.

“This could help ease importation costs and overall inflation,” he added.

The peso closed at P57.995 against the greenback at end-February, appreciating by 37 centavos from its P58.365 per dollar finish at end-January.

“Owing to the relative stable prices of consumer products added to strong showing of the peso against the dollar, the inflation for the month of February is expected to go down,” Emmanuel J. Lopez, professorial lecturer at the University of Santo Tomas Graduate School, said.

## **INFLATIONARY**

On the other hand, analysts noted factors such as high electricity rates could have driven up February inflation.

## **PRESSURES**

“Slightly higher electricity prices also offset the decline in crude oil prices,” Citi Economist for the Philippines Nalin Chutchotitham said.

Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) raised the overall rate by P0.2834 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) to P12.0262 per kWh in February from P11.7428 per kWh in January.

“Inflation drivers in February include price hikes in electricity and local petroleum products as well as higher prices of select food items such as meat, fish, fruits, and vegetables,” Security Bank Corp. Vice-President and Research Division Head Angelo B. Taningco said.

Save for rice, other key food items could potentially stoke inflation during the month.

“Price pressures will show up in the food and utilities baskets,” Moody’s Analytics economist Sarah Tan said.

“Notably, onion prices soared in February — as much as 70% higher than the prior month. Surging prices have prompted officials to inspect onion warehouses to ensure that supply is not being withheld from the market amid the ongoing harvest season,” she added.

Data from the Agriculture department showed that the retail price of local red onion averaged P174.01 per kilogram as of end-February.

“However, substantial price pressures were seen in food items other than rice. Prices of cabbages, bitter melons, onions, and eggplants rose within the range of 30-50% year on year as supply conditions remain tight from past typhoons,” Mr. Dacanay said.

In the coming months, headline inflation is expected to remain within the 2-4% target band.

“On balance, the inflation outlook remains benign with food inflation expected to ease in the near to medium term,” ANZ Research said.

The BSP expects inflation to average 3.5% this year, accounting for risks.

The favorable inflation outlook should prompt the central bank to continue on its easing cycle, analysts said.

“We think that overall inflation staying below the midpoint of the official 2-4% target will allow the BSP to cut rates by 25 basis points (bps) at its next policy meeting in April,” ANZ said.

Ms. Tan said the next rate cut could come as early as April “should inflation sustainably remain close to the midpoint of the target range and the peso stabilize.”

The Monetary Board’s next rate-setting meeting is scheduled for April 3.

“From what I see, BSP will resume rate cutting in April as we now know BSP was planning to cut this month, but a last-minute policy uncertainty increase caused the delay,” Sun Life Investment Management and Trust Corp. economist Patrick M. Ella said.

Weak economic output will also make space for the central bank to continue easing.

“If inflation expectations continue to be subdued and anchored, we think that the MB (Monetary Board) has room to trim the policy rate to support GDP (gross domestic product) growth and as follow up to the recent RRR (reserve requirement ratio) cut,” Mr. Asuncion said.

The BSP last month announced it will cut the RRR of universal and commercial banks and nonbank financial institutions with quasi-banking functions by 200 bps to 5% from 7%, effective March 28.

“A stable inflation print but a faltering GDP growth is a signal for the central bank to do a rate cut at their next meeting,” Mr. Erece said.

“Although they have cut reserve requirements for banks, a policy rate cut can boost investments and spending which are the country’s primary drivers of growth.”

UnionBank expects a total of 50 bps worth of cuts this year.

On the other hand, analysts said that the BSP may continue to remain cautious.

“Looking ahead, even with inflation remaining within the BSP’s 2-4% target range, we think the BSP will likely maintain its cautious stance while awaiting clarity on global trade policies and their impact on inflation and growth,” Chinabank said.

The BSP unexpectedly kept interest rates steady at 5.75% in February, its first policy meeting for the year.

This put a pause to its easing cycle, as it slashed borrowing costs by a total of 75 bps last year through 25-bp cuts in three straight meetings.

BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. said “global trade uncertainties” prompted the policy hold.

However, he said the central bank is still in easing mode and signaled the possibility of up to 50 bps worth of reductions this year.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2025/03/03/656573/poll-inflation-likely-eased-in-february/>

## BUSINESS WORLD:

# Tomato oversupply exposes logistics, storage shortcomings

March 3, 2025 | 12:04 am



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

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

THE GOVERNMENT needs to address logistics bottlenecks and build more storage facilities to avoid wasting the tomato surplus, industry representatives said.

The government needs to focus on “small- or medium-sized basic logistics infrastructure for clusters of production areas,” according to retired agriculture professor Roy S. Kempis, who is now the director of the Center for Business Innovation at Angeles University Foundation.

The farmgate price of tomatoes in some parts of the country last week fell to as low as P4 per kilo due to excessive supply, with some volunteer groups having to connect producers directly to consumers online.

Mr. Kempis said in an e-mail that the Department of Agriculture (DA) could subsidize refrigerated trucks for produce that is bound to points of mass consumption.

He said the private sector should also be encouraged to operate small- to medium-scale warehouses and invest in transportation assets like four-wheeled or six-wheeled vans.

With such investments, “Wastage in the form of unusable and rotten produce like tomatoes can be minimized.”

The government should also help farmers bring and sell their tomatoes wholesale to processing or manufacturing plants for products that use tomatoes.

Agriculture group SINAG told *BusinessWorld* on Sunday that there is still an oversupply of tomatoes, with the produce being sold for very low prices or given away for free in Nueva Ecija, Nueva Vizcaya, and Pangasinan.

It said a 22-kilo crate of tomatoes is selling for as little as P80. “Others are direct buying at P8-10 per kilo.”

Rural Rising Philippines said Saturday that middlemen have been paying farmers only P2 per kilo in Nueva Ecija.

“With that, you can pay only for the rent of the tricycle that brought your tomatoes to a market and a meal at a *carinderia*,” according to the group, which has been facilitating rescue buys.

“It costs the farmer more to harvest it than to sell it.”

Tomato retail prices hit P360 per kilo last month amid tight supply.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Chief Economist Michael L. Ricafort said in the face of supply bottlenecks that result in huge increases or decreases in vegetable prices, “digitization of agricultural trade is the way to go.”

Digitalizing the trade would democratize the marketplace and efficiently bridge perishable agricultural products from sellers with surplus to buyers or areas with tight supply, he noted in a Messenger chat.

“Digitization would help address the gaps in the marketplace, with cold storage facilities and processing facilities among the intervention measures,” he said.

“Digitalization is the means, but we still need the human connections to make it work,” Ateneo de Manila economics professor Leonardo A. Lanzona said via Messenger chat.

“The best way is to send experts across the different regions to determine the barriers and the solutions,” he added.

Mr. Lanzona noted that the distribution problem largely stems from the country’s archipelagic landscape, and it did not help that the government has failed to “develop institutional mechanisms that can reduce transportation and transaction costs.”

“We need to strengthen our institutions that can correct these geographic and cultural challenges,” he said.

“What separates a developed and a developing country is the quality of institutions.”

Meanwhile, Mr. Kempis also pitched price support for farmers dealing with low farmgate prices of their produce.

“The amount of price support can be recovered from the price differential when tomatoes are sold at a higher wholesale price in areas where final consumption happens,” he said.

The DA last week urged tomato farmers to work with municipal or regional agriculturists for direct market linkages, noting that the government can market their produce in nearby markets or Kadiwa centers.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel V. de Mesa cited the need for cold storage facilities due to the seasonality of agricultural commodities like tomatoes.

The DA is hoping to inaugurate a 5,000-ton capacity cold storage facility in Taguig City by 2026.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/03/03/656539/tomato-oversupply-exposes-logistics-storage-shortcomings/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# India March temperatures pose risk to wheat crop

March 3, 2025 | 12:03 am



REUTERS

NEW DELHI — India will have above-average temperatures in March across most regions following a warmer February, the weather office forecast on Friday, conditions that could threaten winter-sown crops such as wheat, chickpea and rapeseed.

Both maximum and minimum temperatures will be above average in most areas in March, D.S. Pai, a senior scientist at the state-run India Meteorological Department, told reporters.

India, the world's second-largest wheat producer, is counting on a bumper harvest in 2025 to avoid expensive imports, after three consecutive years of poor crop yields.

But higher temperatures could cut yields for the fourth straight year, trim overall wheat production and force authorities to lower or remove the 40% import tax to facilitate overseas shipments by private traders to tide over shortages.

Reuters reported Thursday that India was poised to enter the summer season with one of the warmest Marches on record, and above-average temperatures through most of the month threaten to cut yields of the maturing wheat crop.

Heatwave days are expected over most parts of central regions, some adjoining northern areas of southern India and parts of northeastern and eastern regions, Mr. Pai said.

Indian farmers primarily grow wheat in the northern states of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and the central state of Madhya Pradesh.

India was forced to ban wheat exports in 2022 after a sharp rise in temperatures in February and March that year shrivelled the crop.

Indian wheat prices jumped to a record high this month due to dwindling supplies. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/03/03/656538/india-march-temperatures-pose-risk-to-wheat-crop/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# US beef prices could rise as Canada ranchers reduce cattle herds, fearing Trump tariffs

March 3, 2025 | 12:01 am



**REUTERS**

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Canadian farmer Jon Vaags quit buying beef cattle in November after the election of US President Donald Trump made tariffs on Canadian exports seem like a serious risk.

Now there are more than 1,000 empty spaces on his feedlot, where cattle are fattened on grain before being slaughtered for beef.

“We stopped buying feeder cattle altogether,” said Mr. Vaags, whose family’s feedlot has room for 3,000 cattle and is usually full from November until the summer.

After years of drought raised feed costs, North American farmers culled animals and did not rebuild their herds, so the beef cattle population on both sides of the border had been declining even before the threat of US tariffs on Canadian exports.

Canada, the world’s No. 8 beef exporter and 10<sup>th</sup> largest cattle producer, exports more than half its beef production, with 75% going to the US.

The Trump administration has repeatedly listed lower food prices as a major objective. But at US grocery stores, beef prices have already risen due to the smallest US cattle herd in 74 years and the smallest Canadian herd in 36 years.

The average price of ground beef in US cities has risen 43% since the beginning of 2020, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Global beef prices are up 34% according to the International Monetary Fund.

Historically, cows, calves, breeding stock, slaughter animals and beef-in-boxes have flowed across the US-Canada border as if it were not there. Canada imports many young cattle from the US, fattens them, slaughters them, then sends the meat back to the US. Tariffs would upend this process.

Mr. Trump has threatened 25% tariffs on most imports from Canada and Mexico. The US cannot easily replace Canadian beef. It is already in a beef deficit and importing from as far away as Australia. Canadian beef fills in where there is not enough US beef. Canada's government-backed lender Farm Credit Canada would like farmers to expand their herds to grow the country's beef industry, but says tariffs are discouraging ranchers. Some Canadian cattle ranchers "might sit this one out for 12 months, sit this one out for six months," said Farm Credit Canada's chief economist JP Gervais of Mr. Trump's tariff threats. The impact of a declining cattle herd is trickling down to other agricultural businesses in North America, including the sale of grains purchased up to a year ahead of time to fatten cattle. "It's killing the business," said Jim Beusekom, president of Market Place Commodities, a feedgrains trader in Alberta's "feedlot alley." Without looming tariffs, high meat prices may have encouraged some Canadian farmers to replenish their herds. Instead, prices are prompting many to cash out by sending all the animals they can, including aging cows and young female breeding stock, into the meat market. Canada's cow and calf herd at the start of 2025 was 0.7% lower than in January 2024, which was 2.1% lower than in 2023. At 10.9 million head it is the smallest since 1988, according to Statistics Canada. Curtis Vander Heyden, who runs three feed lots with his two brothers in Alberta, estimates one truckload of fattened cattle would face a \$28,000 bill due to tariffs. US buyers will balk at the price jump, either refusing to pay more than they would for US cattle, or just not buying Canadian animals at all, he thinks. But Mr. Vander Heyden wants to retain his workforce, so he is not reducing his cattle-feeding operations. "I can't stop. We have employees. There are a lot of families depending on us," said Mr. Vander Heyden. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/03/03/656536/us-beef-prices-could-rise-as-canada-ranchers-reduce-cattle-herds-fearing-trump-tariffs/>

## BUSINESS WORLD:

# US will spend up to \$1B to combat bird flu

March 3, 2025 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

WASHINGTON — The US will invest up to \$1 billion to combat the spread of bird flu, as well as increase imports of eggs in an effort to drive down high prices, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said.

A three-year bird flu outbreak in US poultry has killed 166 million chickens since 2022, according to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) data.

The virus has also infected nearly 1,000 dairy herds and almost 70 people, including one who died, since early 2024.

The USDA will spend up to \$500 million to provide free biosecurity audits to farms and \$400 million to increase payment rates to farmers who need to kill their chickens due to bird flu, Ms. Rollins said at a conference of state agriculture officials.

In a Wednesday *Wall Street Journal* column, Ms. Rollins said some of the money will come from cuts to USDA spending by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency. But on a call with reporters later in the day, Ms. Rollins' chief of staff, Kailee Tkacz Buller, said the money was coming from the USDA's Commodity Credit Corp., a discretionary pool of funding available to the secretary.

The agency did not immediately clarify the discrepancy.

The USDA is exploring vaccines for chickens but is not yet authorizing their use, Ms. Rollins said. The poultry industry is divided on whether to vaccinate chickens because of potential trade implications.

"It could be a solution, but to push that out now and require it, we're just not ready," Ms. Rollins said of vaccines when speaking to reporters at the White House on Wednesday.

Some industry groups expressed relief that the agency did not move to require vaccines, said Rick Phillips, director of poultry professional services veterinarians for drugmaker Boehringer Ingelheim, who was on the call.

"There was a little bit of a sigh that they didn't move fast on certain things like immediately going to vaccination until we better understand the nature of what we're dealing with," he said.

The administration plans to increase imports and decrease exports of eggs to boost domestic supply and combat record high egg prices, Ms. Rollins said. Turkey has said it will export 15,000 tons of eggs to the US through July.

This year, Turkey is expected to supply about 420 million eggs to the US, up from about 70 million normally, Ms. Buller said.

Egg prices have nearly doubled since last year. Scant supply is leading some consumers to "panic buy," said Virginia Tech economist Jadrian Wooten in an e-mail.

In May, the administration of President Joseph Biden allocated more than \$800 million to combat bird flu in livestock. About \$450 million of that money is still available, a USDA official said Tuesday at the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture conference. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2025/03/03/656537/us-will-spend-up-to-1b-to-combat-bird-flu/>



**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# Solar ice plants will reduce crop spoilage – DA

By Giselle P. Jordan

March 3, 2025

A NETWORK of solar-powered ice plants across the country will reduce crop spoilage and postharvest losses, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement.

The objectives, he pointed out, is to improve food supply efficiency and increase the income of farmers and fisherfolk, especially in remote areas.

Funding for the ice plants can come from the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority, and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Tiu Laurel said, noting that ice plants powered by renewable energy sources, like solar and battery systems, will help address critical gaps in the supply chain, especially for high-value crops and fishery products.

The agriculture chief sees each of the ice plants having a 10-metric ton daily production capacity.

## **Spoilage rate**

At present, the spoilage rate in high-value crops ranges from 35 to 40 percent.

"By [having] ice early in the supply chain — from farm to storage, or even directly to the market — we can extend the shelf life of produce," Tiu Laurel explained. "For vegetables, ice can preserve freshness for five to seven days; and for fish, up to seven days."

Access to proper cold storage and ice facilities will allow farmers and fisherfolk to reach a broader market, since they won't have to rely on expensive refrigerated trucks to sell their products to areas farther from their production sites.

Tiu Laurel said it is crucial to integrate the ice plant network with digital tracking systems and food terminals. The logistical enhancements will improve the management and distribution of agricultural products, which will guarantee greater price transparency and allow agricultural commodities to arrive at profitable markets, he stressed.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/03/business/top-business/solar-ice-plants-will-reduce-crop-spoilage-da/2065464>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **House panel keen on SRP for essential food products**

Jovee Marie N. dela Cruz  
March 3, 2025

The House Murang Pagkain Supercommittee (Quinta Comm) on Sunday announced that it is ramping up efforts to lower food prices and has urged the implementation of a suggested retail price (SRP) formula for rice, chicken, pork, fish, and vegetables.

One of the chairpersons of the Quinta Comm Mark Enverga, Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, and House Deputy Majority Leader Erwin Tulfo emphasized the urgency of this measure, reaffirming the panel's commitment to ensuring affordable and stable rice prices for Filipino households.

While acknowledging the progress made, Enverga stressed that more work is needed. He noted that the government's initiative to sell National Food Authority (NFA) rice at P35 per kilo has provided much-needed relief to consumers. However, the committee aims to push prices even lower.

Citing reports that NFA rice is now available in Metro Manila at P33 to P35 per kilo, Enverga said government interventions are yielding positive results. However, he cautioned that long-term affordability depends on resolving structural inefficiencies in the rice market, particularly the influence of cartels and price manipulation by certain traders.

Enverga noted that Republic Act 12022, or the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, signed in September 2024, as "a crucial tool" in this fight.

He called on the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Enforcement Group to swiftly develop and implement measures to dismantle cartels and prevent price-fixing.

Enverga also underscored the need to enhance competition in the rice importation sector. Despite global rice prices dropping and the government reducing rice import tariffs under Executive Order 62—which lowered duties from 35 percent to 15 percent in July 2024—local rice prices have not declined as expected.

To prevent traders from unjustly inflating prices, Enverga urged the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to establish an SRP formula for rice, similar to those used for other essential goods. Under this system, importers would be required to indicate the SRP on rice packaging,

while the Bureau of Customs would assess tariffs based on declared purchase costs, wholesale prices, and SRP.

“With a clear SRP, price markups can be controlled. We need to ensure fair pricing from importation to the retail market,” he said.

For his part, ACT-CIS Rep. Erwin Tulfo strongly backed the implementation of SRP on essential food items with constantly rising prices to prevent businessmen from exploiting market conditions.

“Some traders, such as middlemen and brokers, take advantage of food prices, causing them to skyrocket in markets,” Tulfo said.

He said farmgate prices of rice, vegetables, eggs, and meat—whether chicken or pork—are relatively low, but by the time they reach public markets, their prices have drastically gone up.

“If we analyze it closely, the prices set by producers are affordable, but by the time these goods reach consumers, they are already priced like gold,” said Tulfo.

He further noted that price hikes occur as these products pass through multiple middlemen or traders before reaching retailers.

To address this issue, the lawmaker is urging the Department of Agriculture (DA) to impose SRPs on essential food products such as rice, chicken, pork, fish, and vegetables to curb excessive price hikes.

“With the implementation of SRPs on key food items, we can ensure that product prices are not manipulated,” Tulfo emphasized.

During recent congressional hearings on soaring commodity prices, it was revealed that middlemen and cartel operators are the ones dictating the cost of basic food supplies, particularly rice.

“The SRP will regulate the profits of middlemen, traders, and cartels, ensuring that these products remain affordable in the market,” Tulfo added.

He also mentioned that once food prices stabilize, the DA may lift the SRP implementation.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that the average farmgate price of dry palay was P20.69 per kilo in January 2025, slightly lower than the previous month but

still 17.69 percent higher than the P17.58 per kilo recorded in June 2022, the last month of the Duterte administration.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/03/house-panel-keen-on-srp-for-essential-food-products/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **SRA earmarks funds for soil equipment**

Ada Pelonia  
March 3, 2025

The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) has allotted P17 million for two soil equipment that will increase sugarcane productivity.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said the agency would procure two more units of inductively coupled plasma optical emission spectrometer (ICP-OES) laboratory equipment that could fast-track the analysis of soil samples.

The agency recently procured ICP-OES from France that was placed in Negros Island, the county's top sugar-producing region.

Previously, the SRA analyzed 5,176 sugarcane stalk samples and 6,621 soil samples from 2020 to 2024. However, these figures were only based on the soil samples sent by farmers.

With the procurement of ICP-OES, the agency is expecting to analyze 5,760 soil samples annually. However, the SRA chief is hoping to analyze at least 10,000 soil samples this year.

"To make use of the equipment, I challenged [SRA personnel] to go out and collect the samples," Azcona told reporters in a recent interview.

He said the modern soil analysis equipment will help in ensuring that the agency would be a frontrunner on research when it comes to the sugar industry.

The SRA chief noted that the two ICP-OES are set to undergo a procurement process this year, with a tentative delivery date by 2026.

The SRA said it is hopeful that sugar output would hit the agency's forecast of 1.78 million metric tons (MMT) for the current crop year.

Data from the SRA showed that as of February 16, sugarcane production reached 13.07 MMT, 18.16 percent lower than the 15.97 MMT recorded in the previous year.

Despite this, the decline in sugarcane milled during the period was not as steep as the 27.75 percent drop recorded 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.

“The only thing that keeps us hoping (that we’ll reach the projected output) is that the northern part of Negros is delayed in harvesting because of the weather,” Azcona said.

“So, if that’s true, then we have a chance to hit 1.78 MMT.”

SRA data indicated that raw sugar production as of February 16 stood at 1.01 MMT, about 28 percent lower than the 1.4 MMT recorded in the previous year.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/03/sra-earmarks-funds-for-soil-equipment/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **DA wants to build solar-powered ice plants, storage facilities**

Ada Pelonia  
March 3, 2025

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is keen on establishing solar-powered ice plants to minimize spoilage and post-harvest losses of farm goods.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said this would boost food supply efficiency while potentially increasing the income of farmers and fishers, particularly in remote regions.

“By introducing ice early in the supply chain—from farm to storage, or even directly to market—we can extend the shelf life of produce,” Laurel said in a statement.

“For vegetables, ice can preserve freshness for 5 to 7 days, and for fish, up to 7 days.”

Powered by renewable energy sources, such as solar and battery systems, the DA chief said the ice plants would help address critical gaps in the supply chain, particularly for high-value crops and fishery products.

Each ice plant will have a daily production capacity of around 10 metric tons (MT), he added. Currently, the spoilage of high-value crops ranges from 35 to 40 percent.

Laurel said the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) could provide the funding for these sustainable ice plants.

“With proper cold storage and ice facilities, farmers and fishermen could expand their market reach, selling their products to areas farther from their production sites without relying on expensive refrigerated trucks,” the DA said.

It added that many farmers are currently limited to selling locally. With the added benefit of ice, however, they could potentially extend their market reach across the country.

Meanwhile, Laurel also underscored the importance of integrating this ice plant initiative with infrastructure such as food terminals and digital tracking systems.

He noted that these logistics enhancements would bolster the management and distribution of agricultural products, ensuring better price transparency and allowing products to reach the most profitable markets.

“This push for solar-powered ice plants is part of a broader effort by the Department of Agriculture to boost food security and reduce waste within the agricultural sector, contributing to a more sustainable and efficient supply chain.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/03/da-wants-to-build-solar-powered-ice-plants-storage-facilities/>



## **BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# **Choco makers worry about weakening demand**

Ada Pelonia

March 3, 2025

Record-high cocoa prices are weighing heavily on the chocolate industry which has been searching for strategies that would mitigate the impact of high production costs.

The previous year saw volatile swings in cocoa quotations worldwide due to poor output in West Africa, where the majority of the crop is grown.

Lucrezia Cogliati, commodities analyst at Fitch solutions unit BMI said worries on the recovery of cocoa harvest in the Ivory Coast and Ghana, the world's leading producers, kept prices above recent historical averages.

“We expect this to weigh on margins of chocolate producers due to increased input costs,” Cogliati told the BusinessMirror via email.

However, she noted that other ingredients also play a role, and the increases would not be proportional, particularly from the consumer point of view.

In January, global cocoa prices rose by 4.17 percent to \$10.75 per kilo from \$10.32 per kilo in the previous month, based on World Bank data. This saw a further increase from its average quotation in 2024 at \$7.33 per kilo.

Amid shortfall concerns, the International Cocoa Organization (ICCO) projects global cocoa output to rebound by 7.8 percent to 4.84 million metric tons (MMT) this year, with a surplus of 142,000 metric tons (MT).

While this could signal a potential relief to the dwindling stockpile, the international organization raised a caveat that persistently high prices would dent demand.

“High cocoa prices which have prevailed for the past several years has incentivized farmers to put in more efforts and resources in cocoa farming despite the challenges they face,” the ICCO said in its first forecast for the current cocoa year, which runs from October to September.

“On the contrary, declines in demand are expected as high cost of raw materials for cocoa users seems to be causing reduced demand.”

Figures from the ICCO showed that projected grindings, an indicator of consumption, would shrink by 4.8 percent this year to 4.65 MMT from 4.89 MMT in 2023/24.

‘Demand destruction’

For Oran van Dort, commodity analyst at Rabobank, the chocolate industry would be hard pressed to find the optimal strategy for pricing their products.

“They can either pass it on directly through higher prices for their products or indirectly by utilizing shrink- and skimpflation strategies,” Van Dort told this newspaper.

He said chocolatiers might avail of initiatives such as replacing cocoa butter with palm oil or reducing the size of chocolate bars for the same price.

“Industry could also choose to absorb the cost, but this is unlikely with how much cocoa has risen,” Van Dort said.

“As a result, higher costs for consumers will likely lead to demand destruction and could see their sales volumes decrease.”

Adjustments

Nestlé Philippines SVP and Head of Corporate Affairs Jose Uy III said that in the event of higher ingredient costs, the company avoids raising prices “as much as they could” by finding ways to absorb cost increases, such as through operational efficiencies.

“We avail of any cost savings opportunities to mitigate the impact on the cost of our finished goods,” Uy told the BusinessMirror.

With this, he said the prices of their cocoa-based products only saw adjustments while their chocolate malt beverage remained the same following the surge in global cocoa prices.

“For products with cocoa, there have been price adjustments for our chocolate bars as of 2024. We have been able to maintain prices for our chocolate-malt drink up to the present,” Uy said.

“We have not reformulated our chocolate products, and so have not used any substitutes for cocoa.”

Uy also noted that the company purchases cocoa powder from grinders or processors that source cocoa beans to convert into cocoa liquor and powder.

He added that the Nestlé Group hedges cocoa through its global trading company, Nestrade.

Data from the International Trade Centre (Intracen) showed that the Philippines imported \$323,190 of cocoa products in 2023, with chocolate and cocoa powder combined accounting for nearly 98 percent of the shipments at \$316,642.

### Hedging woes

BMI recently reported that cocoa futures posted the largest month-on-month decline, with the \$8,482 per MT recorded on February 24 being the “lowest price” since November.

“Cocoa futures have experienced downward movements, largely driven by concerns about demand,” the research firm said.

Currently, London cocoa futures stood at £7,451 per MT, 34.06 percent higher than the previous year’s level but 14.47 percent lower than the year-to-date.

According to Van Dort, market participants were shifting from futures and instead banking on other hedging techniques like over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives or options since it has become costlier to hedge bean purchases.

“[Due] to the volatility of cocoa there is significant price risk which they would like to hedge. Futures are a hedging method that industry has been pivoting away from, as it has become more expensive to hedge with the margin system, as there is less cocoa to hedge, and as industry has reduced its hedge horizon,” he said.

“As a result, they have been utilizing other hedging methods, such as OTC derivatives or options.”

### Benefits

Meanwhile, Agriculture Undersecretary Cheryl Marie Natividad-Caballero said local cacao farmers could benefit from elevated global cocoa prices by boosting their production.

Caballero said since the Malagos Chocolate bagged the gold award at Salon du Chocolat, the Philippines has established its market presence for the crop.

Japanese firms are looking at the country to source out their products as well as other Asean nations, with Malaysia being the Philippines' biggest buyer, she added.

"Prices are rising and it's advantageous to [the farmers] because they can choose their buyers or they can sell at a better price," Caballero told the BusinessMirror.

However, she noted that the increasing global radar for Philippine cacao should be accompanied by consistent quality beans "so they could benefit from the current price."

Caballero said the Department of Agriculture (DA) has launched several initiatives as part of efforts to enhance yield and bolster the country's cacao industry.

Aside from the provision of cacao seedlings, fermentation, and drying facilities, she said the agency is also looking at establishing at least 10 community-based nurseries for cacao per region this year.

Caballero said these nurseries could fasttrack the harvest of cacao beans in two to three years from when they are planted compared to the usual five-year timeline.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed that local cacao harvest slightly grew to 10,840 MT last year from 10,760 MT in 2023.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/03/choco-makers-worry-about-weakening-demand/>

**ABANTE TONITE:**

# **Trading firm kinasuhan sa sibuyas smuggling**

March 2, 2025

Sinampahan ng kasong technical smuggling ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang Chastity Consumer Goods Trading matapos umanong ideklara nitong processed food ang pinapasok na dalawang container ng sibuyas sa Subic.

Sabi ng DA, labag ito sa Food Safety Act at Plant Quarantine Law.

Natuklasan ang mga sibuyas nang siyasatin ang dalawang container van na dumating noong Agosto 2024 matapos na makatanggap ng impormasyon tungkol sa technical smuggling ang mga awtoridad.

Idineklara umano ng Chastity na processed food ang laman ng mga container van at ang pag-import nito ay sakop ng Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Sa DA ang sibuyas at iba pang agricultural products.

Sabi ng DA, walang import permit o Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance ang Chastity para sa sibuyas na ipinasok sa Subic.

Dagdag ng DA, hindi rin rehistrado ang Chastity sa Bureau of Plant Industry bilang importer na labag din sa regulasyon.

Kinumpiska ng Bureau of Customs ang kabuuang 6,395 na sako ng sibuyas na pinasuri naman ng DA. Ayon sa pagsusuri ng BPI, kontaminado ang sibuyas at napakarami ng mikrobyong natagpuan dito kasama na e.Coli na nakikita sa dumi ng mga tao at hayop.

Kinasuhan din ng DA ang may-ari at presidente ng Chastity na kinilalang si Lina Bang Talan. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/03/02/trading-firm-kinasuhan-sa-sibuyas-smuggling/>

**ABANTE TONITE:**

# Gulay, iba pang pagkain tutukan, huwag lang bigas

March 2, 2025

Hindi lang mapababa ang presyo ng bigas ang puntirya alinsunod sa mga programa ni Pangulong Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ R. Marcos Jr., iginiit ni Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez na dapat ding maging abot-kaya para sa ordinaryong pamilyang Pilipino ang presyo ng mga gulay at nanawagan ng agarang aksyon kaugnay nito.

Sinabi ni Speaker Romualdez, isang abogado mula sa University of the Philippines (UP) na ang pagpapababa ng presyo ng pagkain ay isang pambansang prayoridad at kasama rito ang gulay na bahagi ng kampanya ng gobyerno upang magkaroon ng seguridad sa pagkain ang bansa.

“Hindi lang bigas ang dapat nating tutukan—paano naman ang gulay? Araw-araw na pangangailangan ito ng bawat pamilyang Pilipino. Kailangan nating tiyakin na may sapat, abot-kaya, at masustansiyang pagkain sa hapag-kainan ng bawat Pilipino,” saad ng lider ng Kamara na mayroong 306 kinatawan.

Batay sa pinakahuling datos mula sa Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) ang pabagobagong presyo ng gulay. Noong Pebrero 2025, ang karaniwang presyo ng tinging kamatis ay nasa ₱109.94 bawat kilo, bumaba mula sa ₱158.67 noong huling bahagi ng Enero. Gayunpaman, ang presyo ng pulang sibuyas ay tumaas sa ₱162.69 bawat kilo mula ₱153.70, habang ang kalamansi ay tumaas sa ₱86.63 bawat kilo mula ₱81.61.

Ayon kay Speaker Romualdez, ang mga pagbabago sa presyo ay nagpapahirap sa badyet ng pamilyang Pilipino kaya dapat itong mapababa at mapanatiling abot-kaya.

Tinukoy ni Speaker Romualdez ang mga pangunahing dahilan ng mataas na presyo ng gulay, kabilang ang mahinang imprastraktura sa agrikultura, hindi epektibong transportasyon mula sakahan patungo sa pamilihan, at kakulangan ng pasilidad para sa pag-iimbak pagkatapos ng ani.

“Mas mataas ang gastos sa produksiyon at pagbiyahe ng gulay mula probinsiya papuntang pamilihan. Masyadong maraming middlemen ang kumikita, pero ang magsasaka nalulugi at ang mamimili nagdurusa sa mahal na presyo. Hindi ito makatarungan,” paliwanag niya.

Muling iginiit ng pinuno ng Mababang Kapulungan na ang pamumuhunan sa imprastraktura ng agrikultura ang susi sa pagpapababa ng presyo ng gulay. Binanggit niya ang kasalukuyang mga hakbangin ng Department of Agriculture (DA) upang pagandahin ang mga farm-to-market road at pasilidad sa imbakan, na makakatulong upang mabawasan ang mga pagkalugi matapos ang ani at mapatatag ang suplay.

Binigyang-diin din ni Speaker Romualdez ang kahalagahan ng pagsigurong makarating nang maayos sa mga pamilihan ang lokal na ani upang maiwasan ang sobrang pag-asa sa mahal na imported na gulay.

“Kailangan nating palakasin ang ating sariling ani. Kung puro imported na gulay ang ibabaha sa merkado, paano naman ang ating mga magsasaka? Ang solusyon ay hindi puro pag-aangkat, kundi pagpapalakas ng ating sariling produksyon,” aniya.

Bukod sa imprastruktura, isinusulong niya ang mas malaking puhunan sa modernisasyon ng teknolohiya sa pagsasaka upang mapalakas ang lokal na ani ng gulay. Kabilang dito ang mas malawak na access sa de-kalidad na binhi, subsidiya sa pataba, at tulong-pinansyal para sa maliliit na magsasaka.

“Dapat siguruhing may sapat na suporta ang mga nagtatanim ng gulay para hindi sila nalulugi. Hindi natin kailangang umasa sa mahal na imported na produkto kung kaya nating itanim at ibenta ito sa mas murang halaga,” dagdag niya.

Nanawagan din ang abogado at pinuno ng Mababang Kapulungan para sa mas mahigpit na pagsubaybay sa presyo at regulasyon upang matiyak ang patas na presyo sa farmgate para sa parehong mga magsasaka at mamimili.

“Kung mura ang bili sa magsasaka pero napakamahal pagdating sa palengke, may mali. Kailangang tiyakin natin na patas ang kita ng ating mga magsasaka habang abot-kaya ang presyo para sa mamimili,” ani Speaker Romualdez.

Bilang bahagi ng pangmatagalang solusyon, hinimok niya ang mas matibay na pakikipagtulungan sa pagitan ng mga ahensya ng gobyerno, mga lokal na pamahalaan, at pribadong sektor upang makabuo ng isang sustenableng sistema ng pagpepresyo ng pagkain.

Nanawagan siya sa National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) at sa DA na magsagawa ng regular na pagsusuri ng mga patakaran upang matiyak ang epektibong mga hakbang sa pagpapatatag ng presyo ng gulay.

“Hindi natin ito puwedeng iwanan sa merkado nang walang malinaw na plano. Mula sa pagtatanim hanggang sa bentahan sa palengke, dapat may tamang regulasyon,” binigyang-diin niya.

Muling tiniyak ni Speaker Romualdez ang kanyang dedikasyon sa pagpasa ng mga panukalang batas na magpapatibay ng pangmatagalang solusyon sa pagtaas ng presyo ng pagkain.

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/03/02/gulay-iba-pang-pagkain-tutukan-huwag-lang-bigas/>

**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:**

# **SRP sa mga pagkain tinukuran ni Cong. Tulfo**

Joy Cantos

March 3, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Sang-ayon si ACT-CIS Rep. Erwin Tulfo na lagyan ng suggested retail price o SRP ang mga pagkain na laging tumataas ang presyo para maiwasan ang pagsasamantala ng ilang tusong mga negosyante.

Ayon kay Cong. Tulfo, inaabuso umano ng ilang mga negosyante tulad ng mga middleman o mga broker ang presyo ng ilang pagkain dahilan para sumirit ang presyo nito sa merkado o mga palengke.

“Kasi kung susuriin ng mabuti, mura ang benta sa farmgate o ‘yung mga producer ng mga bigas, gulay, itlog at karne ng mga manok at baboy pero pagdating sa palengke presyong ginto na ito”, paliwanag ng Tulfo na tumatakbong senador sa ilalim ng Alyansa sa Bagong Pilipinas.

“Tumataas na ang presyo pagdaan sa kamay ng mga middleman o traders bago pa ipasa sa sa retailers na nasa mga palengke”.

Kaya giit ng mambabatas, lagyan ng Department of Agriculture ng SRP ang mga pagkain na laging tumataas ang presyo tulad ng bigas, karne ng manok at baboy, isda, gulay, at iba pa.

“Ang SRP kasi ang magkokontrol sa kikitain ng mga middleman o trader o kartel para affordable pa rin ang produkto pagdating sa merkado”, ani Tulfo.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2025/03/03/2425397/srp-sa-mga-pagkain-tinukuran-ni-cong-tulfo>



**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:**

# Mga kandidato hinimok, iprayoridad na mapababa presyo ng bigas

Joy Cantos

March 3, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Nanawagan si Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez sa mga kandidato sa paparating na midterm elections 2025 na gawing prayoridad ang mga hakbang na magpapababa sa presyo ng bigas.

Binanggit ni Romualdez na ang maagap na hakbang ng gobyerno, kabilang ang pagdeklara ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ng food security emergency, ay nagbigay-daan sa pagpapalabas ng buffer stocks ng National Food Authority (NFA) upang patatagin ang presyo ng bigas at tiyakin ang abot-kayang suplay para sa mga mamimili.

Linakda rin ng DA ang pinakamataas na suggested retail price (SRP) na P49 kada kilo para sa imported rice simula Marso, habang ang NFA rice ay ibinebenta sa halagang P35 kada kilo upang matulungan ang mga low-income na mamimili. Layunin ng mga hakbang na ito na pigilan ang hindi pangkaraniwang pagtaas ng presyo ng bigas sa bansa, sa kabila ng pagbaba ng gastos sa pandaigdigang merkado at mga buwis sa importasyon.

“Alam natin na ang bawat butil ng bigas ay mahalaga sa bawat pamilyang Pilipino. Nakikita natin ang mga positibong hakbang ng gobyerno, pero hindi pa tayo dapat makampante. Marami pa tayong kailangang gawin para matiyak na abot-kaya ang presyo ng bigas para sa lahat,” ayon kay Romualdez.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2025/03/03/2425396/mga-kandidato-hinimok-iprayoridad-na-mapababa-presyo-ng-bigas>

**ABANTE:**

## **NFA pumalag sa bigas na may bukbok**

March 2, 2025



Itinanggi ng National Food Authority (NFA) na galing sa kanila ang bigas na nakitang may bukbok sa Cubao, Quezon City.

Sa report ni NFA Administraror Larry Lacson, ang nakitang bigas na may bukbok ay galing sa Food Terminal Inc. na binili sa mga pribadong negosyante sa bansa.

Hindi aniya naglalabas ng bigas ang NFA kung may bukbok at kung sakali mang may nakalusot na bigas na may bukbok ay kaagad na pinapalitan ito.

“Gusto nating linawin: hindi nanggaling sa NFA ‘yung stocks na nakitaan ng bukbok sa Cubao. Ga-ling iyan sa FTI, si FTI naman binili niya itong stocks sa private traders dito sa Pilipinas,” ani Lacson. (Aileen Taliping)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2025/03/02/nfa-pumalag-sa-bigas-na-may-bukbok/>