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MANILA BULLETIN:

Addressing the country's rising food prices

BY [J. ALBERT GAMBOA](#)

Mar 4, 2025 05:47 AM

The Department of Agriculture declared a food security emergency last month after the National Price Coordinating Council issued a resolution urging such a critical move. This was primarily in response to the surging cost of rice, which has reached ₱50 to ₱60 per kilo. The emergency declaration allows the National Food Authority to release buffer stocks and sell them to local markets at lower prices.

Republic Act No. 12708, or the Agricultural Tariffication Act, was signed into law by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in December 2024. It aims to address supply shortages or extraordinary cases like the rising rice prices. One of his major campaign promises in 2022 was to lower the cost of rice to ₱20 per kilo.

But it's not only rice prices that are increasing in the Philippines. In January 2025, overall food inflation accelerated primarily because of the faster inflation rate of vegetables and fruits at 21.1 percent versus 14.2 percent the previous month. Among food commodities, tomatoes recorded the highest inflation, with its price soaring by a whopping 155.7 percent last month.

During a press conference last Feb. 18, former Senate President Vicente Sotto III urged the government to buy food directly from farmers to ensure fair prices for both producers and consumers. He said eliminating multiple layers of middlemen would provide local farmers better compensation for their produce and remove the markups in each layer.

Sotto proposed that the government purchase “50 percent of all the outputs of our agricultural products in the country at their farm gate price.” He pointed this out as part of his platform during campaign sorties with other administration candidates in the upcoming midterm elections.

To further show his independence, Sotto reaffirmed the significance of the EDSA People Power Revolution as the nation commemorated this historic event last week despite Marcos' downgrading of Feb. 25 into a “special working day” from its usual designation as a “special non-working holiday” during the six preceding administrations. As the composer of “Magkaisa”—an iconic anthem of the 1986 People Power uprising—he called on Filipinos to keep the spirit of EDSA alive and highlighted the importance of preserving its legacy for future generations while emphasizing that the lessons of freedom, unity, and change remain deeply embedded in the Filipino identity.

Farm-to-table initiatives

In the private sector, homegrown hospitality chain Astoria Hotels and Resorts (AHR) has established its farm-to-table program as an effort to support the agricultural sector by sourcing different types of fruits and vegetables directly from local and indigenous farmers across the archipelago. This program is a major component of AHR's corporate social responsibility initiatives with its core tenet of purchasing at a fair price and ensuring that the financial benefit to farmers is equitable.

Another member of the Astoria Group is the Astoria Culinary Expert Services (ACES), which was recently granted the license to operate as a food manufacturer by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Its signature product is the Astoria-ACES' Philippine royal ube powder made from 100 percent locally grown ube or purple yam.

Ube is increasingly becoming popular globally due to its striking color and unique flavor profile. This trend has contributed to a worldwide culinary movement, with ube being incorporated into a variety of European dishes such as croissants and pancakes. It is also being utilized to create innovative alcoholic beverages catering to the diverse tastes of the global market, like Astoria's ube martini.

Made by a team of food technologists, chefs, farmers, and agricultural specialists, Astoria-ACES' Philippine royal ube powder has undergone extensive testing and refinements adhering to rigorous food safety standards. It is produced in an FDA-compliant facility under the supervision of food scientists and quality assurance specialists. Easily re-hydrated in warm water, it can be made into baked goods, quick

desserts, fillings, spreads, ice cream, drinks, and Filipino delicacies in professional kitchens as well as at home.

Such farm-to-table initiatives can help address rising food prices in the country by connecting farmers directly with consumers, restaurants, and retailers, thus reducing transport costs and supply chain insufficiencies.

J. Albert Gamboa is a Life Member of the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines (FINEX) and Chair of the FINEX Media Affairs Sub-Committee on Publications. The opinion expressed herein does not necessarily reflect the views of these institutions and the Manila

https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/4/addressing-the-country-s-rising-food-prices#google_vignette

MANILA BULLETIN:

Palace vows to act accordingly amid rising temperatures

BY [ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS](#)

Mar 3, 2025 01:16 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Castro assured the public that the government would not sit idly by.

Malacañang assured the public that it would implement the necessary measures to combat the possible adverse effects of the soaring heat index on agriculture and the economy.



IT'S GETTING HOT IN HERE — Students and their guardians shield themselves from the sun's harsh rays as they walk from school in Quezon City on Monday, March 3, 2025. Several local government units in Metro Manila have cancelled in-person classes due to the extreme heat index forecast today. (Santi San Juan)

Palace Press Officer and Communications Undersecretary Claire Castro said this after the state weather bureau PAGASA announced that the heat index in Metro Manila could reach 46 degrees Celsius on March 3 and 4, prompting several local government units to suspend classes.

In a press briefing on Monday, March 3, Castro said key government agencies have already probably met to discuss the possible steps to minimize the effects of the rising temperatures.

"Most probably po hindi pa lang po nababa sa amin 'yung action plans ng DA (Department of Agriculture), DSWD (Department of Social Welfare and Development), DepEd (Department of Education), dahil nga kakabalita pa lang po nito (Most probably the action plans of the DA, DSWD, and the DepEd are yet to be cascaded to us because we have just learned of this)," she said.

"So most probably nag-uusap na po sila at titingnan ko po kung ano ang pinaka-status nito (They're probably already talking about this and I will check on its status)," she added.

Despite this, Castro assured the public that the government would not sit idly by.

"Siyempre po lagi pong maghahanda ang pamahalaan patungkol dito (Of course, the government will always prepare for this)," she said.

"Kung ito po ay makakaapekto sa ekonomiya natin ay tayo po ay laging maghahanda patungkol diyan (If this will affect our economy, we will prepare for it)," she added.

Castro said the concerned agencies, particularly the DA, would promptly address the matter to lessen the heat's impact on the agriculture sector.

"Kung ito po talaga ay nakikita po, nababanaag po ang matinding epekto po, kikilos po talaga agad ang ahensya para po matugunan kung ano man ang magiging problema sa mga susunod na araw nitong napakatinding init na nararamdaman natin (If we see that this will have a big effect, the agencies will act to address whatever problems we will face due to the extreme heat we are experiencing)," she said.

The Department of Health (DOH) has [advised](#) the public to take the necessary measures to protect themselves from heat-related illnesses, such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion, fatigue, dizziness, headaches, nausea, and vomiting.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/3/palace-act-accordingly-amid-heat>

MANILA BULLETIN:

As warming climate hammers coffee crops, this rare bean may someday be your brew

BY [ASSOCIATED PRESS](#)

Mar 3, 2025 08:24 PM



Excelsa coffee cherries are harvested at a farm near Nzara, South Sudan on Friday, Feb. 14, 2025. (AP Photo/Brian Inganga)

NZARA COUNTY, South Sudan (AP) — Catherine Bashiamma runs her fingers along the branches of the coffee tree she's raised from a seedling, searching anxiously for its first fruit buds since she planted it three years ago. When she grasps the small cherries, Bashiamma beams.

The farmer had never grown coffee in her village in western South Sudan, but now hopes a rare, climate-resistant species will help pull her family from poverty. "I want to send my children to school so they can be the future generation," said Bashiamma, a mother of 12.

Discovered more than a century ago in South Sudan, excelsa coffee is exciting cash-strapped locals and drawing interest from the international community amid a global coffee crisis caused mainly by climate change. As leading coffee-producing countries struggle to grow crops in drier, less reliable weather, prices have soared to the highest in decades and the industry is scrambling for solutions.

Experts say estimates from drought-stricken Brazil, the world's top coffee grower, are that this year's harvest could be down by some 12 percent.

"What history shows us is that sometimes the world doesn't give you a choice, and right now there are many coffee farmers suffering from climate change that are facing this predicament," said Aaron Davis, head of coffee research at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in London.

Excelsa could play a key role in adapting.

Native to South Sudan and a handful of other African countries, including Congo, Central African Republic and Uganda, excelsa is also farmed in India, Indonesia and Vietnam. The tree's deep roots, thick leathery leaves and big trunk allow it to thrive in extreme conditions such as drought and heat where other coffees cannot. It's also resistant to many common coffee pests and diseases.

Yet it comprises less than 1 percent of the global market, well behind the arabica and robusta species that are the most consumed coffees in the world. Experts say excelsa will have to be shown to be practical at a much larger scale to bridge the gap in the market caused by climate change.

Coffee's history in South Sudan

Unlike neighboring Ethiopia or Uganda, oil-rich South Sudan has never been known as a coffee-producing nation.

Its British colonizers grew robusta and arabica, but much of that stopped during decades of conflict that forced people from their homes and made it hard to farm. Coffee trees require regular care such as pruning and weeding and take at least three years to yield fruit.

During a visit earlier this month to Nzara County in Western Equatoria state — regarded as the country's breadbasket — residents reminisced to Associated Press reporters about their parents and grandparents growing coffee, yet much of the younger generation hadn't done it themselves.

Many were familiar with excelsa, but didn't realize how unique it was, or what it was called, referring to it as the big tree, typically taller than the arabica and robusta species that are usually pruned to be bush- or hedge-like. The excelsa trees can reach 15 meters (about 49 feet) in height, but may also be pruned much shorter for ease of harvesting.

Coffee made from excelsa tastes sweet — unlike robusta — with notes of chocolate, dark fruits and hazelnut. It's more similar to arabica, but generally less bitter and may have less body.

"There's so little known about this coffee, that we feel at the forefront to trying to unravel it and we're learning every day," said Ian Paterson, managing director of Equatoria Teak, a sustainable agro-forestry company that's been operating in the country for more than a decade.

The company's been doing trials on excelsa for years. Initial results are promising, with the trees able to withstand heat much better than other species, the company said. It's also working with communities to revive the coffee industry and scale up production. Three years ago it gave seedlings and training to about 1,500 farmers, including Bashiama, to help them grow the coffee. The farmers can sell back to the company for processing and export.

Many of the trees started producing for the first time this year, and Paterson said he hopes to export the first batch of some 7 tons to specialty shops in Europe. By 2027, the coffee could inject some \$2 million into the economy, with big buyers such as Nespresso expressing interest. But production needs to triple for it to be worthwhile for large buyers to invest, he said.

Challenges of growing an industry amid South Sudan's instability

That could be challenging in South Sudan, where lack of infrastructure and insecurity make it hard to get the coffee out.

One truck of 30 tons of coffee has to travel some 1,800 miles (3,000 kilometers) to reach the port in Kenya to be shipped. The cost for the first leg of that trip, through Uganda, is more than \$7,500, which is up to five times the cost in neighboring countries.

It's also hard to attract investors.

Despite a peace deal in 2018 that ended a five-year civil war, pockets of fighting persist. Tensions in Western Equatoria are especially high after the president removed the governor in February, sparking anger among his supporters. When AP reporters visited Nzara, the main road to town was cut off one day because of gunshots and people were fleeing their villages, fearful of further violence.

The government says companies can operate safely, but warned them to focus on business.

"If I'm a businessman, dealing with my business, let me not mix with politics. Once you start mixing your business with politics, definitely you will end up in chaos," said Alison Barnaba, the state's minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Environment.

Barnaba said there are plans to rehabilitate old coffee plantations and build an agriculture school, but details are murky, including where the money will come from. South Sudan hasn't paid its civil servants in more than a year, and a rupture of a crucial oil pipeline through neighboring Sudan has tanked oil revenue.

Growing the coffee isn't always easy, either. Farmers have to contend with fires that spread quickly in the dry season and decimate their crops. Hunters use fires to scare and kill animals and residents use it to clear

land for cultivation. But the fires can get out of control and there are few measures in place to hold people accountable, say residents.

Coffee as a way out of poverty

Still, for locals, the coffee represents a chance at a better future.

Bashiama said she started planting coffee after her husband was injured and unable to help cultivate enough of the maize and ground nuts that the family had lived on. Since his accident she hasn't been able to send her children to school or buy enough food, she said.

Another farmer, 37-year-old Taban John, wants to use his coffee earnings to buy a bicycle so he can more easily sell his other crops, ground nuts and cassava, and other goods in town. He also wants to be able to afford school uniforms for his children.

Excelsa is an opportunity for the community to become more financially independent, say community leaders. People rely on the government or foreign aid, but when that doesn't come through they're not able to take care of their families, they say.

But for coffee to thrive in South Sudan, locals say there needs to be a long-term mentality, and that requires stability.

Elia Box lost half of his coffee crop to fire in early February. He plans to replace it, but was dispirited at the work it will require and the lack of law and order to hold people accountable.

"People aren't thinking long-term like coffee crops, during war," he said. "Coffee needs peace."

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/3/as-warming-climate-hammers-coffee-crops>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

BOC, DA seize P202 million smuggled mackerel

[Evelyn Macairan](#) - The Philippine Star

March 4, 2025 | 12:00am



Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio and Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. inspect smuggled frozen mackerel seized at the Port of Manila on March 3, 2025.

Ryan Baldemor

MANILA, Philippines — Frozen mackerel valued at P202 million allegedly smuggled from China was confiscated by the Bureau of Customs (BOC) and Department of Agriculture at the Port of Manila (POM) yesterday.

Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel and BOC-POM District Collector Alexander Gerard Alviar inspected 19 shipping containers of frozen mackerel.

The shipment was reportedly misdeclared as frozen fried taro.

The shipment of mackerel has been put on hold since Jan. 20 after the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service requested for inspection of the goods.

Following the examinations conducted by the BOC on Feb. 18 and 19, a warrant of seizure and detention was issued for violation of the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act.

Rubio said the BOC would remain steadfast in preventing the illegal entry of agricultural products into the Philippines.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2025/03/04/2425668/boc-da-seize-p202-million-smuggled-mackerel>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Philippines loses China market for bananas to Vietnam

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

March 4, 2025 | 12:00am



International Trade Centre (ITC) data showed that Vietnam – for the first time – overtook the Philippines as China’s top supplier of bananas last year. *STAR/ File*

First time in decades

MANILA, Philippines — Vietnam has upended the Philippines’ 20-year rule as the top supplier of bananas to China.

International Trade Centre (ITC) data showed that Vietnam – for the first time – overtook the Philippines as China’s top supplier of bananas last year.

China imported a record-high 625,166 metric tons of bananas from Vietnam while its purchase from the Philippines stood at 463,306 MT, the lowest volume in 15 years.

On an annual basis, China’s banana imports from Vietnam expanded by almost 24 percent from 505,633 MT in 2023, reflecting the Southeast Asian country’s growing production and exports for the prized fruit.

Meanwhile, China’s imports of Philippine bananas plunged by 32.45 percent from 685,869 MT in 2023.

Throughout the years, Vietnam has been eroding the Philippines’ share in China’s robust banana market, which imports about 1.8 million MT of bananas annually.

From a peak of 70 percent share in 2017, the Philippines now accounts for only 27.47 percent of China’s banana imports, based on ITC data.

Vietnam now accounts for 37.06 percent of China’s banana imports – a surge from a share of just one percent 10 years ago.

China is one of the Philippines’ top three markets for bananas. It used to be the Philippines’ top market for bananas in 2018 and 2019, thanks to warmer relations between the two countries during the Duterte administration.

However, China has been relegated to the second largest banana market for the Philippines since 2020 due to the economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and persisting domestic production challenges.

In recent years, the rising geopolitical tensions in the West Philippines Sea have also impacted Filipino banana growers, with China further cutting back on its purchases of the country’s prized commodity, industry players confirmed.

The Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA) earlier emphasized that the geopolitical issues compound the persisting and worsening production woes that the local banana industry is facing, particularly with the continued spread of Fusarium Wilt, commonly known as Panama disease.

Furthermore, the volatile spot pricing mechanism of China's market has discouraged growers from exporting to the Asian market as most producers prefer long-term contracts to have more secured profits, experts said.

The PBGEA pointed out that Vietnam's banana industry has been booming because of its larger planted area as well as its additional supplies coming from Cambodia where it "invested a lot."

The reduction in the Philippines' banana market share in China comes at an unfortunate time as the country is also losing substantial market share in South Korea, another prized market for Filipino producers.

The Philippines has been facing mounting competition from both Latin American and Asian banana producers in its key markets such as Japan, South Korea and China.

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) earlier projected that the Philippines may have already fallen to fourth place in the global banana export rankings last year.

The ranking is a notch lower than the third spot for the country in 2023, based on the preliminary report released by the FAO.

The STAR earlier reported that the government and banana industry stakeholders are looking at legislating a plan that will not just revitalize the country's ailing banana sector but also salvage the country's sagging market share abroad.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/03/04/2425633/philippines-loses-china-market-bananas-vietnam>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

BOC: Smuggled frozen mackerel worth P202M seized in Manila port

By: [Luisa Cabato](#) - Reporter / [@luisacabatoINO](#)

INQUIRER.net / 07:23 PM March 03, 2025



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and Rubio, along with District Collector Alexander Gerard E. Alviar, on Monday, March 3, 2025, inspect the P202 million worth of smuggled frozen mackerel at the Port of Manila. (Photo courtesy of the Bureau of Customs Facebook)

MANILA, Philippines — Authorities seized smuggled frozen mackerel worth P202 million at the Port of Manila, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) said on Monday.

According to the BOC, the 19-container shipment, which originated from China, was declared as frozen fried taro in an attempt to bypass regulations.

It was flagged on January 25, following a request from the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service and the Plant Quarantine Service-Bureau of Plant Industry.

The BOC said authorities issued an alert order on February 13, leading to the physical inspection of the shipment from February 18 to 19.

Upon discovering the misdeclaration, the BOC said it immediately issued a warrant of seizure and detention for violating the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act.

“The illegal entry of agricultural products threatens both our farmers and food security,” Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio said.

“We are intensifying our enforcement efforts to stop smuggling syndicates from taking advantage of our trade system,” he added. “This operation demonstrates our commitment to upholding customs laws and protecting local industries.”

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., Rubio, and District Collector Alexander Gerard Alviar inspected the seized containers on Monday.

The bureau said Rubio lauded the collaboration between the BOC, the Department of Agriculture, and other agencies in the seizure of the smuggled goods, which reinforces the government's commitment to safeguarding the nation's economy and food supply.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2040048/boc-smuggled-frozen-mackerel-worth-p202m-seized-in-manila-port>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Zamboanga City distributes P5-million power tillers to farmers' groups

By: [Jr., Teofilo Garcia](#) -

Philippine News Agency / 07:16 AM March 04, 2025



(Photo from Zamboanga CIO)

ZAMBOANGA CITY — The city government on Monday handed over some P5 million worth of farm equipment to farmer associations.

Mayor John Dalipe led the turnover of 48 units of power tillers to 48 beneficiary farmers' associations in front of city hall following a convocation activity.

Of the 48 beneficiaries, 24 are vegetable growers' associations while the remaining 24 are corn farmers groups.

“There are eight identified associations in each agricultural district, of which four are vegetable growers, and four corn farmer associations,” city agriculturist Arben Magdugo said in an interview.

He said the distributed power tillers aim to assist vegetable and corn growers with their land preparation activities.

The recipient farmers' associations will oversee the use of the power tillers.

Rental fees collected from farmers who use them will form a fund that the association can use to maintain the equipment provided to them.

The power tillers were procured under the 2024 annual budget for agriculture.

Monday's distribution of the power tillers was the third batch of farm equipment the city government has turned over to the local agriculture sector.

On February 17, the city government distributed farm tractors worth P19.2 million to enhance agricultural productivity in 98 villages of the city's six agrarian districts.

A week later, the city government again turned over two rice combine harvesters and 24 units of transplanters to farmers' associations.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2040190/zamboanga-city-distributes-p5-million-power-tillers-to-farmers-groups>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

P10-million pump irrigation project launched in Davao Occidental

By: [Che Palicte](#) -

Philippine News Agency / 07:05 AM March 04, 2025



(Photo from NIA-11)

DAVAO CITY — A newly completed P10-million irrigation project in Davao Occidental will provide farmers with sustainable and modern agricultural solutions, the National Irrigation Administration in Davao Region (NIA-11) said Monday.

The Basiawan Pump Irrigation Project, the province’s first groundwater pump irrigation initiative, was turned over to the Basiawan Solar Power Pump Irrigators Association (IA) Inc. in Sitio Kumassie, Barangay Basiawan, Sta. Maria last month.

Benjie Nierre, head of engineering and operations at NIA-11 Davao del Sur Irrigation Management Office (IMO), said the project uses a solar-powered pumping system to lift groundwater.

Then, water is distributed to farmlands through high-density polyethylene pipes for efficient irrigation.

“This project highlights the importance of collaboration among farmers, partner agencies and local government units in achieving sustainable agricultural development,” Nierre said.

Preciano Natad, president of the IA, expressed gratitude for the project, noting its significance during the dry season.

“It will greatly help our fellow farmers and neighboring areas, increasing their production. Our vision is to further develop this project to benefit future generations,” Natad said.

The project will be operated and maintained in partnership with the IA to ensure its sustainability and long-term impact on the region’s agricultural productivity.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2040183/p10-million-pump-irrigation-project-launched-in-davao-occidental>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Agri PPI decline accelerates in Q4

March 3, 2025 | 9:00 pm



BW FILE PHOTO

THE DECLINE in prices for farm products paid by producers accelerated in the fourth quarter to -7.0%, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said in a report.

The fourth-quarter reading compares with the third-quarter year-on-year decline of -5.7%.

On a quarter-on-quarter basis, the PPI for agriculture fell 4.3% in the fourth quarter, the PSA said.

PPI growth for crops was -9.7% in the fourth quarter, decelerating from the -8.0% year-on-year reading a quarter earlier.

“Quarter-on-quarter, the PPI of crops recorded a 6.1% decrease in the fourth quarter of 2024 from a 3.1% increase in the third quarter of 2024,” the PSA said. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/03/03/656928/agri-ppi-decline-accelerates-in-q4/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Misamis Oriental farm-to-market road seeks to improve access for coffee, cacao growers

March 3, 2025 | 8:54 pm



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said it has started work on a P26-million farm-to-market road in Misamis Oriental to improve market access to growers of coffee, cacao, coconut, and banana.”

The DTI said in a statement on Monday that the 1.06-kilometer road in Barangay Bal-ason, Gingoog City, is funded by its Rural Agro-enterprise Partnership for Inclusive Development (RAPID) Growth Project.

RAPID is in turn backed by a value chain-based development program, known as the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

“This project is a significant step toward improving market access for our farmers, allowing them to transport their produce more efficiently, reduce post-harvest losses, and enhance their income opportunities,” Misamis Oriental DTI Provincial Director Jesusa M. Abear said.

“By strengthening the agricultural value chain, we are fostering rural economic growth and ensuring a more sustainable livelihood for smallholder farmers in Gingoog City,” she added.

Aside from the road project, the DTI said it will continue to support farmer-beneficiaries through capacity building, enterprise development, financing support, and matching grants.

Separately, the DTI said that Coco Island, an enterprise specializing in high-quality coconut-based products, is set to complete its P15-million first processing facility by April.

“This initiative is set to enhance production, promote sustainability, drive regional economic growth, and ultimately boost the coconut industry in Region 12,” the DTI said.

The new facility is expected to streamline Coco Island’s processing operations and ensure high-quality eco-friendly production.

“Furthermore, it will create numerous local jobs and offer greater opportunities for micro, small and medium enterprises, coconut farmers, and entrepreneurs,” the DTI said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/03/03/656933/misamis-oriental-farm-to-market-road-seeks-to-improve-access-for-coffee-cacao-growers/>

REMATE:

Sibuyas na idineklarang frozen fish egg balls buking; consignee kalaboso

March 3, 2025 08:31



MANILA, Philippines- Naghain ng reklamo ang Department of Agriculture (DA), sa pamamagitan ng Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), laban sa Chastity Consumer Goods Trading sa paglabag sa Food Safety Act at sa Plant Quarantine Law, matapos ang umano’y maling pagdeklara ng kompanya sa imported onions bilang processed food.

Sinabi ng DA nitong Linggo na ikinasa ang reklamo matapos dumating ang dalawang container vans na naka-consign sa Chastity sa Port of Subic noong August 2024. Tinukoy din ang Chastity owner at president na si Lina Bang Talan bilang respondent sa kaso.

Batay sa DA, idineklara ang mga kargamento bilang frozen fish egg balls, subalit sa pagsisiyasat ay natuklasang naglalaman ito ng nasa 6,395 stacks ng yellow onions na walang kaukulang sanitary at phytosanitary import clearance.

Ayon sa DA, lumabas sa mga pagsusuring isinagawa ng BPI sa mga sibuyas na mayroon itong mataas na lebel ng microbiological contaminants, kabilang ang E. coli, kaya hindi ito ligtas kainin. Hindi rin registered importer ang consignee, ang Chastity Consumer Goods, sa BPI.

“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,” pahayag ng Agriculture Department. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/sibuyas-na-idineklarang-frozen-fish-egg-balls-buking-consignee-kalaboso/>

REMATE:

Farm-to-market initiatives bibitbitin ng 132 GP Partylist

March 3, 2025 16:46



Manila, Philippines-Isusulong ng 132 GP (Galing sa Puso) Partylist sa Kongreso ang batas na naglalayong mapalakas ang farm-to-market initiatives ng bansa upang tugunan ang problema sa kakulangan o over production ng mga produkto sa agrikultura.

Sinabi ni 132 GP Partylist first nominee Atty. JP Padiernos na dahil sa takot na mabulok at dahil sa pagbaba ng farm gate prices sa P4 kada kilo ng kamatis napipilitan na lang ang mga magsasaka na ipamigay ang kanilang mga ani.

Ito’y makaraang magkaroon ng pagbaba at pagtaas sa presyo ng mga produkto. Nitong Enero, inulat ng Department of Agriculture na umabot ng P360 per kilo ang presyo ng kamatis habang P20 naman ang mga medium-sized na kamatis sa mga merkado sa Maynila.

Idiniin ni Padiernos ang kahalagahan ng epektibo at maayos na legislative measures upang matugunan ang kakulangan at mga suliranin sa farm-to-market system. Ang maayos na legislative measures ay makatutulong sa pantay-pantay na distribusyon ng mga kamatis at mapanatili ang presyo nito sa iba’t ibang rehiyon.

“Hindi dapat nangyayari ang ganitong oversupply o kakulangan ng ani sa isang agrikultural na bansang tulad ng Pilipinas. Kung mayroong maayos na pamamahala sa farm-to-market na inisyatiba ng gobyerno ay tiyak na matutulongan nito ang ating mga magsasaka,” sabi ni Padiernos.

Naniniwala ang nasabing partylist na ang ganitong agricultural logistics initiative ay makatutulong umano sa pagpapaunlad ng market access ng mga magsasaka at mapalakas pa ang agricultural resilience at food security ng bansa.

Pinabulaanan din ni Padiernos na ang presyo ng kamatis ay nagbago depende sa ani noong may mga bagyo kaya naman mas kailangan umano ng bansa ng mas epektibong storage systems para sa lahat ng produktong pang-agrikultura.

Nauna nang naghain ng iba't ibang panukala ang 132 GP Partylist na naglalayong mapataas ang economic growth ng bansa sa pamamagitan ng sustainable agriculture.

Kasama na rito ang pagkakaroon ng waste-to-energy technologies, pagpapatayo ng industrial ecozones, at hatcheries upang masuportahan ang lokal na pagsasaka. RNT

<https://remate.ph/farm-to-market-initiatives-bibitbitin-ng-132-gp-partylist/>

REMATE:

Ilang coastal areas sa Leyte, E. Samar sapul pa rin ng red tide

March 3, 2025 09:23



TACLOBAN CITY- Positibo pa rin ang katubigan sa ilang bahagi ng Leyte at Eastern Samar sa toxic microorganism na nagdudulot ng red tide.

Sa Feb. 26 advisory, pinanatili ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) ang local red tide warning sa Leyte, Leyte, at Matarinao Bay sa Eastern Samar saklaw ang mga munisipalidad ng General MacArthur, Quinapondan, Hernani, ar Salcedo, kung saan nagpositibo pa rin ang mga sample sa pyrodinium bahamense, isang dinoflagellate na kilalang nagpoprodyus ng red tide toxin.

Mahigpit na ipinagbabawal ng BFAR ang pagkuha, pagbebenta, at pagkain ng lahat ng shellfish at “alamang” sa mga lugar na ito upang maiwasan ang paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP).

Ligtas namang kainin ang isda, pusit, hipon, at alimasag mula sa mga lugar na ito basta’t sariwa, nahugasang mabuti, at tinanggalan ng lamang-loob bago iluto. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/ilang-coastal-areas-sa-leyte-e-samar-sapul-pa-rin-ng-red-tide/>

REMATE:

Epekto ng dry season pinaghahandaan na ng pamahalaan

March 3, 2025 19:17



MANILA, Philippines – KAGYAT na kikilos ang gobyerno sa matinding epekto ng paparating na dry season o panahon ng tagtuyot.

Tinanong kasi si Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro sa press briefing sa Malakanyang kung paano poprotektahan ng pamahalaan ang agricultural sector laban sa pinsala na dala ng inaasahang panahon ng tagtuyot partikular pa't ang "danger" level heat index ay nararanasan na sa ilang parte ng bansa.

"As of now, talaga po ay hindi pa po kami nakakapag-usap patungkol diyan, pero kung ito po talaga ay nakikita po, nababanaag po ang matinding epekto, kikilos po talaga agad ang mga ahensiya para po matugunan kung anuman ang magiging problema sa mga susunod na araw itong napakatinding init na nararamdaman natin," ang sinabi ni Castro.

Nauna rito, pinag-iingat ng Department of Health (DOH) ang publiko laban sa mga sakit na maaaring makuha ngayong nagsisimula ng maramdaman ang mainit na temperatura sa ating bansa.

Ito ay kasunod ng forecast mula sa state weather bureau na ang heat index sa Metro Manila ngayong araw, Marso a-3 hanggang bukas, Marso a-4 ay aabot sa 46 degrees Celsius.

Gayundin inaasahan ang “danger” heat index sa lalawigan ng Pampanga, Nueva Ecija, Bataan, at Olongapo City.

Ayon kay Health spokesperson ASec. Albert Domingo, ang temperaturang mula 33-41 degrees Celsius ay inuri ng weather bureau bilang “extreme caution” habang 42-51 degrees Celsius bilang “danger.”

Ang ganitong mga temperatura aniya ay maaaring humantong sa heat cramps o pamumulikat at heat exhaustion o pagkahapo, na may mga sintomas tulad ng pagkapagod, pagkahilo, sakit ng ulo, pagsusuka, at pagkahilo.

Nagbabala din ang opisyal na ang matagal na pagkakalantad sa init ay nagpapataas ng posibilidad ng heat stroke na isang seryosong kondisyon na may kaakibat na pagkawala ng malay, pagkalito, o kaya ay seizure/kombulsyon, na maaaring nakamamatay kung hindi ito ginagamot.

Kung sakali mang maramdaman ang nabanggit na mga sintomas, narito ang payo ng DOH para sa paunang lunas.

Samantala, sa isang statement, inihayag ni DOH Secretary Ted Herbosa na maituturing ng mapanganib kapag umabot na sa 42 degree Celsius ang health index kayat nagpaalala ito sa publiko na dalasan ang pag-inom ng malinis na tubig, at umiwas na mabilad sa araw mula alas-10 ng umaga hanggang alas-4 ng hapon. *Kris Jose*

<https://remate.ph/epekto-ng-dry-season-pinaghahandaan-na-ng-pamahalaan/>

MANILA STANDARD:

Strong bridge, road network assures food security—DA



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr

By DA News

March 3, 2025, 6:45 pm

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. is seeking an audience with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to discuss improving the country's road and bridge infrastructure. The goal is to ensure the smooth flow of agricultural goods, lower transport costs, and strengthen food security.

"The importance of a strong road and bridge network in agriculture, especially in an archipelago like the Philippines, cannot be overstated." Tiu Laurel recently said. "Agriculture relies heavily on logistics, and transport infrastructure directly affects the cost and efficiency of moving farm inputs and produce."

He stressed that well-maintained roads and bridges could lower transportation costs, reduce spoilage, and allow farmers to bring their goods to market faster. This would result in more stable prices for consumers.

The issue is particularly critical in the rice sector. During the recent multiyear budget planning session of the DA, Tiu Laurel noted that Thailand and Vietnam have lower transport costs due to better road conditions.

Trucks in those countries can carry 8 to 10 tons more than the 41-ton limit in the Philippines. "Better infrastructure enables a more efficient supply chain, reducing costs from farm to market," he said.

In contrast, many Filipino farmers and traders overload trucks to cut costs, which damages roads and bridges.

The practice of truckers of loading their vehicles with various even beyond prescribed limits has led to the collapse of several bridges across Luzon and the Visayas in recent years. Some bridges, though rated for specific loads, have been pushed beyond their limits due to excessive overloading. The DPWH manual calls for regular bridge inspections and load rating updates, but enforcement remains weak. Without addressing inadequate road networks and overloading, the problem will persist.

The planned discussions between DA and DPWH aim to pinpoint key areas for road and bridge upgrades, especially in major agricultural regions. DA News

While improving infrastructure is a long-term effort, it is essential for the agricultural sector. Better roads and bridges could mean lower costs for farmers, higher profits and fewer losses from delays or spoilage.

For consumers, this could lead to more stable prices and a secure food supply. Investing in transport infrastructure is not just a necessity—it is vital for national growth and prosperity. DA News

<https://manilastandard.net/spotlight/environmental-and-sustainability/314564142/strong-bridgeroad-network-assures-food-security-da.html>

MANILA STANDARD:

FAO: Farmers critical element of biodiversity

By [UN News](#)

March 3, 2025, 7:00 pm

“Without the farmers, it is only political policy without implementation”—that was the stark message delivered by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)’s Director-General last week to delegates attending the latest round of UN biodiversity talks in Rome.

Over 150 countries met from February 25 to 27 to advance biodiversity finance, accountability and the integration of agrifood systems into global conservation strategies.

Despite groundbreaking agreements on genetic data and recognizing the stewardship role of indigenous peoples at the first round of the COP16 conference in Colombia late last year, this new Conference of the Parties—or COP16.2—aims to close some crucial gaps which are instrumental for implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.

With nature declining at an alarming rate, the challenge now is turning commitments into action. FAO chief Qu Dongyu called for urgent action to transform agrifood systems, stressing that biodiversity must be embedded in food and farming policies. A key focus is the Agri-NBSAPs Support Initiative, launched at COP16 in Cali, Colombia.

The initiative is designed to help governments integrate agrifood systems into their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, to eliminate any conflicts between agricultural policy and biodiversity goals.

Colombia’s COP16 President, Environment Minister María Susana Muhamad, and Agriculture Minister Martha Carvajalino underscored the importance of full implementation.

Dongyu highlighted the deep connections between biodiversity and food security, noting that over half of the Kunming-Montreal Framework’s 23 targets are directly linked to agriculture.

He explained that “biodiversity is also in the soil and in the water” and that it is critical “to look at biodiversity from a holistic, three-dimensional perspective.”

Despite commitments made at COP15, funding remains a sticking point.

Secretary-General António Guterres, warned in a statement that biodiversity is “on the brink” and urged governments to translate pledges into investment. “Success requires accountability. And action demands finance,” he said.

With only a fraction of the required \$200 billion per year mobilized, developing nations are pushing wealthier countries to meet their financial obligations.

Discussions in Rome are expected to focus on accountability frameworks to track spending and ensure resources reach the communities most affected by biodiversity loss.

In the coming days, negotiators will work to finalize agreements on biodiversity finance, implementation strategies and monitoring frameworks.

Dongyu closed his statement by calling for an integrated approach across government sectors.

“We need an integrated approach across government sectors, across Ministries, to ensure the Four Betters: better production, better nutrition, better environment and a better life—leaving no one behind,” he said.

Strategic Framework | FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the Uni...

FAO’ Strategic Framework articulates FAO’s vision of a sustainable and food secure world for all, in the context...

With time running out to meet the 2030 targets, COP16.2 is a key test of global commitment—whether countries will step up or risk falling short on protecting the planet’s ecosystems. **UN News**

<https://manilastandard.net/spotlight/environmental-and-sustainability/314564154/fao-farmers-critical-element-of-biodiversity.html>

MANILA STANDARD:

Erwin Tulfo favors placing SRP on food items

March 3, 2025, 9:35 am

Alyansa para sa Bagong Pilipinas senatorial bet and ACT-CIS Rep. Erwin Tulfo favors placing suggested retail prices or SRP on basic food items with prices that are always increasing to prevent businessmen from taking advantage of situations.

“Some business owners, such as middlemen or brokers, are abusing the prices of certain foods, causing them to skyrocket in the market or public markets,” Tulfo said in Tagalog in a statement.

“Because if you examine it closely, the selling price at the farmgate—or from the producers of rice, vegetables, eggs, and chicken and pork—is low, but when it reaches the market, it’s already at a gold price,” he noted.

The lawmaker recommended to the Department of Agriculture to place suggested retail prices (SRP) on basic food items with prices that are always rising such as rice, chicken, pork, fish, vegetables and other commodities.

“With the implementation of the SRP on certain foods, we can ensure that product prices cannot be manipulated,” Tulfo explained.

In the congressional hearings on the high prices of commodities that were held during the past few months, it was revealed that middlemen and those engaged in cartels are the ones dictating the prices of basic food items such as rice.

“The SRP will control the profits of middlemen, traders, or cartels, so that the products remain affordable when they reach the market,” Tulfo said.

The lawmaker added that once the prices of these commodities stabilize, the DA could already remove their SRPs.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/elections-2025/314563939/erwin-tulfo-favors-placing-srp-on-food-items.html>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Coco oil exports breach \$2 billion on rising global prices

Ada Pelonia

March 3, 2025

THE country's earnings from coconut oil exports surged to over \$2 billion last year as international quotations improved significantly, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Figures from the PSA showed that the value of crude and not chemically modified coconut oil exports jumped by 85.4 percent to \$2.19 billion from \$1.18 billion in 2023.

Crude coconut oil grew by 51.3 percent to \$1.24 billion in 2024 from \$819.69 million, while coconut oil not chemically modified skyrocketed by 163 percent to \$946.37 million from \$359.78 million, based on PSA data.

Netherlands was the top market of the Philippines's coconut oil exports last year at \$604.65 million, while the United States trailed at \$537.53 million.

Other top markets for the country's shipments of the tropical oil were Malaysia at \$312.21 million, Indonesia at \$138.94 million, Italy at \$127.21 million, and China at \$110.32 million.

PSA data also showed that the volume of coconut oil exports reached 1.67 million metric tons (MMT) in 2024, higher than the 1.13 MMT outbound shipments recorded in the previous year.

The United Coconut Association of the Philippines (Ucap) attributed the spike in coconut oil prices last year to the tightness in coconut supply caused by El Niño and rising global demand.

Ucap said the average quotation of coconut oil settled at \$1,512 per metric ton (MT) in 2024, or 40.78 percent higher than the average \$1,074 per MT recorded in the previous year. Currently, it averages \$1,980 per MT.

The industry group traced the spike in coconut oil prices to a combination of factors. For one, El Niño stressed coconut trees, leading to a 20-percent reduction in yield since water scarcity affected productivity.

Ucap said the booming demand for the tropical oil globally had also put pressure on prices. This rising demand was traced to a shift in market preference, where coconut oil is seen as a "more sustainable, organic, and natural alternative raw material" for a variety of uses such as culinary trends and personal care.

"The combination of diminished supply due to El Niño and the persistent growth in global demand for coconut products have created the perfect storm for a spike in coconut oil prices over recent months."

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/03/coco-oil-exports-breach-2-billion-on-rising-global-prices/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA to provide cold chain, food logistics systems

Ada Pelonia
March 3, 2025



DA Sec. Francisco Tiu Laurel

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) will provide energy-efficient cold chain and food logistics system projects as part of efforts to boost the farm sector's productivity.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. signed memorandum circular (MC) 5, which stressed the need to tackle infrastructure challenges and ensure the availability and accessibility of food supply.

“There is a strong need to effectively connect production with consumption, especially considering the vast distances between farms and the target markets,” the circular read.

“Poor infrastructure results in high transportation costs, wastage, lower farmer's income and food insecurities.”

The DA through its Agriculture and Fisheries Logistics Office (AFLO) included in its infrastructure investments plan the provision of energy-efficient cold chain and food logistics system.

This would include a Cold Storage Warehouse (CSW) and the necessary machinery and equipment; ice plant; refrigerated hauling or refrigerated delivery trucks; tram line, trading posts and other similar market facilities, among others.

“The projects offer more efficient logistics support to the farmers, especially after production or when bringing the farm produce closer to the market, end users or consumers,” the DA said.

It added that these could also effectively manage the distribution of quality food in other markets in case of an oversupply.

Solar-powered ice plants

Meanwhile, the DA recently said it is keen on establishing solar-powered ice plants to minimize spoilage and post-harvest losses of farm goods.

The agriculture chief 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 noted that 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.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/03/da-to-provide-cold-chain-food-logistics-systems/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA, BOC seize P202-M imported frozen fish

BusinessMirror

March 3, 2025

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Bureau of Customs (BOC) on Monday seized P202 million worth of frozen fish at Manila South Harbor.

The agencies conducted a spot check on two 40-foot container vans, which revealed boxes of frozen mackerel or tamban and frozen round scad or galunggong instead of the processed plant-based commodities from China as declared in the shipping manifest. The two vans inspected were among a batch of 19 such vans.

Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) Director Gerald Glenn Panganiban explained that his agency had previously alerted the BOC about the shipments, which were declared to contain 550 metric tons (MT) of frozen fried taro sticks, sweet potato balls, and various frozen food items.

However, the agency said the spot check on two container vans consigned to Straradava Household Products Co. Ltd. showed that the cargo contained mackerel and not taro products as claimed, in a clear violation of importation regulations.

The DA said the shipment arrived in Manila South Harbor on January 21, and some of the 17 other suspected, yet-to-be-inspected container vans were consigned to Fendee Consumer Goods Trading, a company sharing the same Binondo address as Straradava.

While processed plant-based foods fall under the jurisdiction of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) within the Department of Health (DOH), imported fish and marine products are regulated by the DA's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

Meanwhile, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. issued a warning to unscrupulous businessmen that the DA and its bureaus are closely monitoring such activities.

He then informed FDA Director General Samuel Zacate of the smuggling case to ensure interagency coordination.

Laurel also commended the BPI staff stationed at Manila's ports, noting their role in uncovering the violation of the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act or the law imposing stricter penalties for smugglers and other offenders.

"These dedicated BPI personnel should be emulated [...] Their diligence led to the discovery of this clear violation," Laurel was quoted in the statement as saying.

Among those present during the inspection were BOC officials led by Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio, Zacate, Nathaniel Liberato, Panganiban, Assistant Director for Regulatory Services Ruel Gesmundo, NPQSD Chief Joan May Tolentino, PQS South Harbor OIC-Area Manager Henrick Exconde, and BFAR Director Elizer Salilig.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/03/da-boc-seize-p202-m-imported-frozen-fish/>

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:

Farm-to-market initiatives target sa Kongreso

Philstar.com

March 3, 2025 | 3:43pm

MANILA, Philippines – Isang party-list group ang nangakong magsusulong umano ng batas sa Kongreso na naglalayong mapalakas pa ang farm-to-market initiatives ng bansa upang tugunan ang problema sa kakulangan o over production ng mga produkto sa agrikultura.

Ayon kay GP (Galing sa Pusong) Party-list first nominee Atty. JP Padiernos, dahil sa takot na mabulok at dahil sa pagbaba ng farm gate prices sa P4 kada kilo ng kamatis napipilitan na lamang umano ang mga magsasaka na ipamigay ang kanilang mga ani.

Ito'y makaraang magkaroon ng pagbaba at pagtaas sa presyo ng mga produkto. Nitong Enero, inulat ng Department of Agriculture na umabot ng P360 per kilo ang presyo ng kamatis habang P20 naman ang mga medium-sized na kamatis sa mga merkado sa Maynila.

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"Hindi dapat nangyayari ang ganitong oversupply o kakulangan ng ani sa isang agrikultural na bansang tulad ng Pilipinas. Kung mayroong maayos na pamamahala sa farm-to-market na inisyatiba ng gobyerno ay tiyak na matutulungan nito ang ating mga magsasaka," sabi ni Padiernos.

Naniniwala ang nasabing grupo na ang ganitong agricultural logistics initiative ay makatutulong umano sa pagpapaunlad ng market access ng mga magsasaka at mapalakas pa ang agricultural resilience at food security ng bansa.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2025/03/03/2425606/farm-market-initiatives-target-sa-kongreso>