

**CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY MARCH 05, 2025**

**A. MANILA BULLETIN:**

**'Sino ang nandadaya?': Better rice price monitoring to help unmask manipulators—  
Enverga**

**China slaps extra tariffs of up to 15% on imports of major US farm exports,  
including soy and beef**

**B. THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

**Frozen fish found in P202-M misdeclared shipment from China; DA vows  
crackdown**

**DA, NFA pressed to keep palay farmgate prices fair, reduce imports**

**Local salt producers want tighter import rules**

**C. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

**NFA: red tape delays release of rice stocks to local gov'ts**

**Philippines seen to reduce rice imports this year**

**Local producers call for curb on salt imports**

**Abaca fiber production in Bicol gets support from DA's fiber industry office**

**China, Canada retaliate to Trump tariff war**

**Trade wars intensify as US tariffs on Canada, Mexico, China take force**

**D. BUSINESS WORLD:**

**Rice MSRP expected to drop to P45 per kilo**

**Banana industry competitiveness eroding as PHL loses position as top  
supplier to China**

**E. BUSINESS MIRROR:**

**House food superpanel urges NFA to buy 20% of harvest**

**Rice imports at end of February totaled 504,726 MT**

**F. MANILA STANDARD:**

DA predicts further decline in rice prices

**G. MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT:**

PH ready to ink \$1B World Bank loan for agri-fishery

NFA sees low LGU participation in affordable rice program due to poor logistics, red tape

**H. THE MANILA TIMES:**

A billionaire's (agri modernization) folly

**I. REMATE:**

DA: Rice MSRP posibleng bumaba sa P45/kilo sa pagtatapos ng Marso

P200M ismagel na isda, kinumpiska ng BOC

**J. ABANTE TONITE:**

‘Pinas mangungutang ng P58B

NFA uupa ng bodega bago ang anihan

**K. PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:**

Pagpapababa sa presyo ng bigas, agricultural products, isusulong

AGAP: Sangkot sa P202 milyong mackarel smuggling, kasuhan ng Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# 'Sino ang nandadaya?': Better rice price monitoring to help unmask manipulators-- Enverga

BY [ELLSON QUISMORIO](#)

Mar 4, 2025 10:33 AM

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## AT A GLANCE

- Heightened price monitoring on rice will help determine who are manipulating the price of Filipino staple food to the detriment of both farmers and consumers, says Quezon 1st district Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga.



Quezon 1st district Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga (Contributed photo)

Heightened price monitoring on rice will help determine who are manipulating the price of Filipino staple food to the detriment of both farmers and consumers.

Quezon 1st district Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga, a co-chairman of the House quinta-committee (quinta-comm), had this to say as he brought attention to the upcoming rice harvest season approaching from March to May.

To prevent further manipulation, Enverga proposed a real-time digital price monitoring system to make farm gate prices transparent and accessible.

“Dapat may malinaw na presyuhan para hindi maloko ang mga magsasaka. Kung may tracking ng presyo sa merkado, makikita natin agad kung sino ang nandadaya (There must be a clear pricing mechanism so as not to dupe the farmers. If we track prices in the market, we will immediately see who is manipulating them),” he said.

The quinta-comm, also known as the Murang Pagkain Super-committee, had been tasked by House Speaker Martin Romualdez to find ways to keep prices of rice and other food products affordable.

In a previous hearing this year, the joint panel highlighted the huge difference between the farm gate price of palay (unhusked rice) and retail prices of the staple grain when it reaches the market.

This suggests that there are shenanigans going on somewhere in the supply chain.

“Kailangang tiyakin natin na patas ang kita ng ating mga magsasaka habang abot-kaya ang presyo para sa mamimili (We need to ensure that farmers get fair earnings while consumers get fair prices),” Enverga emphasized.

The ranking solon said that in past harvest seasons, particularly last September to October, some farmers were reportedly forced to sell their palay at ₱14 to ₱18 per kilogram—far below sustainable levels.

Recent data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) shows that the average farm gate price of dry palay stood at ₱20.69 per kilogram in January 2025. Still, without stricter enforcement, unscrupulous traders may again take advantage of the upcoming harvest season by suppressing prices.

Enverga urged the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Food Authority (NFA) to step up monitoring and actively intervene in price stabilization.

He suggested that the NFA purchase at least 20 percent of locally produced rice this harvest season to secure fairer prices for farmers.

“Kung bibili ang NFA ng mas malaking bahagi ng ani, hindi madaling madidiktahan ng traders ang presyo. Kapag may kumpetisyon sa pagbili, sigurado ang kita ng magsasaka (If NFA purchases a bigger share of the harvest, the traders won't be able to dictate the prices. Competition ensures earnings for the farmers),” the lawmaker explained.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/4/better-rice-price-monitoring-to-help-unmask-manipulators-enverga>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **China slaps extra tariffs of up to 15% on imports of major US farm exports, including soy and beef**

**BY [ASSOCIATED PRESS](#)**

Mar 4, 2025 02:12 PM



**Chickens walk in a fenced pasture at an organic farm in Iowa on Oct. 21, 2015. (AP Photo/Charlie Neibergall, File)**

BEIJING (AP) — China announced Tuesday it will impose additional tariffs of up to 15% on imports of key U.S. farm products, including chicken, pork, soy and beef.

The tariffs announced by the Commerce Ministry are due to take effect from March 10. They follow U.S. President Donald Trump's order to raise tariffs on imports of Chinese products to 20% across the board. Those took effect on Tuesday.

Imports of U.S. grown chicken, wheat, corn and cotton will face an extra 15% tariff, it said. The tariff on sorghum, soybeans, pork, beef, seafoods, fruit, vegetables and dairy products will be increased by 10%.

Also Tuesday, Beijing placed 10 more U.S. firms on its unreliable entity list, which would bar them from engaging in China-related import or export activities and from making new investments in the country.

The firms listed are TCOM,Limited Partnership; Stick Rudder Enterprises LLC; Teledyne Brown Engineering; Huntington Ingalls Industries; S3 AeroDefense; Cubic Corporation; TextOre; ACT1 Federal; Exovera and Planate Management Group.

Senior executives of these companies will also be banned from entering China and work permits, and Chinese visitor and residency permissions also will be revoked, the Commerce Ministry said.

The companies were placed on the list for selling arms to or cooperating on military technologies with Taiwan in recent years, the ministry said. China claims the self-governed island as its own territory.

The addition of the 10 companies comes after China last month added two firms, fashion company PVH Group and biotechnology company Illumina, to the unreliable entities list.

Separately, China added 15 U.S. companies to its export control list, including aerospace and defense companies like General Dynamics Land Systems and General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, among others.

“China has decided to include 15 U.S. entities that endanger China’s national security and interests in the export control list, prohibiting the export of dual-use items to them,” the ministry said in a statement.

China's is a major importer of American farm products, though its purchases dipped after Trump launched a trade war during his first term in office, and then recovered.

In 2021-22, the United States logged record export values to China for soybeans, corn, beef, chicken meat, tree nuts, and sorghum. Cotton exports to China also rebounded, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. U.S. farm exports to China totaled \$33.8 billion in fiscal 2023 and \$36.4 billion in fiscal 2022.

But China has been diversifying its sources for farm imports, buying more soybeans from Brazil and Argentina, among other growers.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/4/china-slaps-extra-tariffs-of-up-to-15-on-imports-of-major-us-farm-exports-including-soy-and-beef>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Frozen fish found in P202-M misdeclared shipment from China; DA vows crackdown

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

March 4, 2025 | 6:17pm



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. carries a bag of frozen fish from a misdeclared shipment worth P202 million during the agency's spot inspection on Monday, March 3, 2025.

Department of Agriculture via Facebook

MANILA, Philippines — After the Bureau of Customs (BOC) flagged 19 container vans with a misdeclared shipment that carried frozen fish worth P202 million, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said it will take action against those responsible.

During an inspection on Monday, March 3, the DA found that two of the 40-foot container vans contained boxes of frozen mackerel (alumahan) and frozen round scad (galunggong).

The shipment's manifest had declared 550 metric tons of frozen fried taro sticks, sweet potato balls and assorted food products from China. Importers had listed the cargo as processed plant-based commodities, but it instead contained fish.

“Kung nakalusot ito, then pupunta sa merkado, malamang ‘yung smugglers hindi na nila ipapababa ‘yung presyo, dahil they will try to make maximum profits for their risk,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

(If this had slipped through and reached the market, the smugglers likely wouldn't lower the prices, as they would try to maximize their profits for the risk they took.)

The two container vans were reportedly consigned to Straradava Household Products Co. Ltd., which means the company was listed as the intended recipient of the shipment.

The remaining 17 containers have yet to be inspected, but authorities said they were also consigned to a firm registered at the same Binondo, Manila address as Straradava — Fendee Consumer Goods Trading.

The DA also noted that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under the Department of Health (DOH) is responsible for overseeing processed plant-based foods.

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) under the DA regulates imported fish and marine products.

“Papasok ito sa bagong Anti-Economic Sabotage Act. Talagang hahabulin namin ng BOC at ng FDA itong mga perpetrators na ito at we’ll bring them to justice,” Tiu Laurel added.

(This falls under the new Anti-Economic Sabotage Act. We, along with the BOC and FDA, will go after these perpetrators and bring them to justice.)

The BOC said the 19 container vans arrived at Manila’s South Harbor on January 21. The Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) then ordered the BOC to hold their release for a spot inspection due to suspected misdeclaration of contents.

“Vineverify natin kung yung mga certificate of product registrations na present nila is legit po at nagdaan sa proseso ng FDA,” FDA Director General Samuel Zacate said on Monday.

(We are verifying whether the certificate of product registrations they presented are legitimate and have undergone the proper FDA process.)

The FDA issues this permit to authorize the registration of a health product before it can be marketed, imported, exported, distributed or sold.

According to a report by state media PTV News, the DA will assess whether the misdeclared frozen products are safe for human consumption and, if deemed suitable, donate them to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Kadiwa centers.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/03/04/2425866/frozen-fish-found-p202-m-misdeclared-shipment-china-da-vows-crackdown>



**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# DA, NFA pressed to keep palay farmgate prices fair, reduce imports

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

March 4, 2025 | 4:12pm



Undated photo shows a Filipino farmer carrying a stack of newly harvested palay.

The Philippine STAR / Edd Gumban, file

MANILA, Philippines — With the palay harvest season approaching amid the dry season, the Department of Agriculture (DA) and National Food Authority (NFA) were urged to step up monitoring of farmgate prices, not just retail prices.

In a statement on Tuesday, March 4, Rep. Mark Enverga (Quezon, 1st District) said the government needs to ensure fair pricing at both the farmgate and retail levels.

He said stricter monitoring of palay prices would help prevent traders from undercutting farmers with unfairly low farmgate prices.

Enverga also proposed a real-time digital monitoring system to make farmgate prices transparent and accessible to the public, complementing the DA's existing retail price tracking.

“Dapat may malinaw na presyuhan para hindi maloko ang mga magsasaka. Kung may tracking ng presyo sa merkado, makikita natin agad kung sino ang nandadaya,” Enverga added.

(There should be clear pricing to prevent farmers from being deceived. If market prices are tracked, it will be easier to identify those manipulating prices.)

Farmers are set to harvest palay in March and April, but Enverga warned of a potential drop in farmgate prices, a concern repeatedly raised by peasant groups.

## Fears over palay falling below P20/kg

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), some regions recorded farmgate prices of palay below P20 per kilogram in the last quarter of 2024.

In Central Luzon, farmers sold dry palay at an average of P18.17 per kilogram in September, while in Caraga, prices dropped further to P17.72 per kilogram in October.

Enverga, who chairs the House committee on agriculture and food, said these prices are far from sustainable for farmers.

The [latest PSA data](#) shows that the national average farmgate price for fancy dry palay stands at P23.17 per kilogram, while other varieties are priced at P20.69 per kilogram. Both figures are lower than the 2024 annual averages of P24.72 and P23.33, respectively.

Enverga warned that without strict government monitoring, some traders may exploit the dry harvest season by bringing down farmgate prices.

**Increase NFA's purchase.** He suggested that the NFA procure at least 20% of locally produced rice before farmers start replanting palay during the wet season in May and June. This, he said, would help curb traders' control over price setting.

“Kung bibili ang NFA ng mas malaking bahagi ng ani, hindi madaling madidiktahan ng traders ang presyo. Kapag may kumpetisyon sa pagbili, sigurado ang kita ng magsasaka,” Enverga added.

(If the NFA buys a larger share of the harvest, traders will find it harder to dictate prices. With competition in purchasing, farmers are assured of their income.)

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier said the NFA should ideally procure 20% of the country's total domestic palay production, or around 4 million metric tons. However, the agency currently buys only 3% to 4%.

### **Cutting reliance on imported rice**

Enverga stressed that efforts to keep rice prices below P50 per kilogram should be paired with long-term strategies to lessen reliance on imports.

To boost local rice production, he called for expanding fertilizer subsidies, improving post-harvest facilities and implementing mechanization programs to lower palay production costs.

According to the Bureau of Plant Industry, the Philippines imported 4.68 million metric tons of rice in 2024, up from 3.8 million metric tons in 2023. The DA previously attributed the increase to lower local production, worsened by floods and typhoons.

Rice output dropped to 19.3 million metric tons in 2024 from 20.06 million metric tons in 2023. Despite this, the DA is targeting a record-high harvest of [20.46 million metric tons in 2025](#).

The Philippines has also remained the world's top rice importer since 2023.

Enverga added that the country should strictly enforce the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, or Republic Act 12022, to crack down on cartels and hoarders.

He urged the law's enforcement group to establish a “clear, enforceable framework” to combat price-fixing and profiteering that harm both farmers and consumers.

The lawmaker also co-chairs the House “Murang Pagkain” Super Committee, composed of five House panels, which has been investigating agricultural smuggling and price manipulation in the country.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/03/04/2425848/da-nfa-pressed-keep-palay-farmgate-prices-fair-reduce-imports>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Local salt producers want tighter import rules

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

March 5, 2025 | 12:00am



The Philippine Association of Salt Industry Networks (PhilASIN) said the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) should adopt a provision that would require the issuance of a certificate of necessity to import (CNI) before any salt importation is made.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — A local salt industry group has urged the government to implement tighter rules and regulations that would limit the country’s importation of the commodity to plug the foreseen shortfall in domestic supply.

The Philippine Association of Salt Industry Networks (PhilASIN) said the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) should adopt a provision that would require the issuance of a certificate of necessity to import (CNI) before any salt importation is made.

This, PhilASIN argued, would prevent oversupply that could depress farmgate prices to the detriment of local salt farmers.

The group said that BFAR must set the total allowable import volume in a given year by determining the gap in local supply and production vis-a-vis the country’s requirement to prevent oversupply.

PhilASIN said farmgate salt prices in certain areas in the country such as Mindoro have dropped to as low as P1.8 per kilo because of abundant domestic supply amid the unabated entry of imports.

The imposition of a CNI requirement is similar to what the government agencies like BFAR do in regulating the entry of imported commodities.

For example, the agriculture chief must first issue a CNI before the government may allow the importation of roundscad or galunggong for wet market sale. Without the CNI, no importation of the fishery product can be made, making all foreign stocks present in the market illegal or smuggled.

“This can be an agenda for the Salt Council, ensuring that BFAR first determines a shortage in local salt supply before issuing an import permit,” the group said during the public consultation of the draft salt import rules yesterday.

PhilASIN also pitched that BFAR adopt the similar consultative process that the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (NFARMC) undertakes in determining the import volume for roundscad in a given period, subject to the approval of the agriculture secretary.

BFAR officials revealed that they wanted to include a provision that would set a cap on the import volume by establishing a maximum importable volume. However, the agency was “hesitant” in including the provision because of the absence of a legal basis.

BFAR officials explained that the pertinent provisions on CNI as stipulated under Republic Act 8550 only cover fish and fishery products, thus, excluding salt. The officials added that they looked for other possible legal basis but to no avail.

But during the public consultation, PhilASIN made its case about the possible interpretation of existing laws that would allow BFAR to impose a CNI on imported salt. After hearing the group’s argument, BFAR officials expressed openness in including a CNI provision in the draft salt import rules.

BFAR officials said they would go back to the technical working group (TWG) tasked to draft the salt import rules and try to incorporate a provision on CNI.

BFAR would still conduct publication consultations with Visayas and Mindanao clusters to solicit comments and suggestions to improve the draft salt import rules.

The draft salt import rules would also undergo deliberations by the TWG and the NFARMC before being endorsed to the agriculture secretary for the final approval.

The country’s salt imports last year fell by 3.65 percent to 659,000 metric tons from 684,000 MT in 2023, based on Philippine Statistics Authority data.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/03/05/2425892/local-salt-producers-want-tighter-import-rules>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# **NFA: red tape delays release of rice stocks to local gov'ts**

By: [Melvin Gascon](#) - Reporter / [@melvingasconINQ](#)

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:31 AM March 05, 2025



Inquirer file photo

MANILA, Philippines — The pullout of rice stocks from the National Food Authority (NFA) for distribution to local government units (LGUs) in a bid to lower rice prices has been slow mainly due to government requirements, NFA Administrator Larry Lacson said on Tuesday.

But according to Lacson, the distribution to LGUs has been slowed down by various factors, mainly the lack of funding to procure rice and a requirement for the fund disbursement to be authorized through a council resolution.

“If the question is how much has the NFA disposed [of], I would say this volume is not much,” he said, citing how San Juan City, with an allocation of 8,000 bags, has so far received only 1,000 bags.

“So, we’re still far from our objective of distributing cheaper rice nationwide,” Lacson added.

According to him, up to 70 LGUs have already signified their intent to participate in the rice distribution program.

“For now, [the cities of] Cotabato and Bacolod are coordinating with NFA, in addition to San Juan, Navotas and Camarines Sur,” he said.

Under the prevailing food security emergency, the NFA is selling rice to LGUs at P33 a kilo, which they may sell for P35.

“We also continue disposing [of] our aging stock of rice—those three months old and above—for P29 a kilo,” Lacson said.

He added that clearing out existing rice stocks was crucial to meeting the country’s new buffer stock levels, as mandated by the Rice Tariffication Law. Under the amended law, the NFA must maintain a buffer stock for 15 days. This year, it needs to procure 545,000 metric tons of palay to maintain a nine-day supply, with a total of 880,000 metric tons needed to meet the 15-day target.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2040503/nfa-red-tape-delays-release-of-rice-stocks-to-local-govts>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Philippines seen to reduce rice imports this year

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)  
[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:08 AM March 05, 2025

Manila, Philippines – The country’s rice imports are expected to decline this year but remain large enough to drive down the selling prices of local rice farmers despite the continuing shortfall in domestic production.

“It might level off but still [reach] over 4 million [metric] tons, mainly due to the drop in palay prices and the widening gap between requirements and local production,” Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) national manager Raul Montemayor said in a Viber message on Tuesday.

In 2024, the Philippines imported about 4.8 million metric tons (MT) of rice.

“Local rice needs to compete with imported rice and for this to happen, palay prices should be adjusted,” he added.

So far, the country imported 504,727 MT of rice from January to Feb. 27, down 34.5 percent from the same period a year ago, based on the data from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

The volume of rice imported so far represented about 12 percent of the FFF’s estimate for 2025.

Vietnam remains the country’s leading source of imported rice, cornering the lion’s share of 73.5 percent. Pakistan has displaced Thailand as the second-largest rice exporter to the country with 12 percent, while latter’s share stood at 10 percent.

Other rice suppliers during the reference period were Myanmar, India and South Korea.

The volume of imported rice that entered the archipelago peaked at 4.8 million MT in 2024, surpassing the previous record high of 3.8 million MT achieved in 2022, figures from the BPI showed.

Montemayor said the prices of imported rice have decreased by 30 percent compared with the same period last year.

## Softer prices, lower output

“[Prices of] imports were higher early last year due to speculations over El Nino and India export bans but leveled off until the tariff was reduced to 15 percent in July 2024,” he added.

On the contrary, local palay output dropped by 4.8 percent to 19.09 million MT in 2024 from a record of 20.06 million MT a year ago, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

Palay production increased between 2019 and 2021. However, the overall volume declined in 2022.

Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. president Danilo Fausto said the government should “control and manage” rice importation while the harvest season is ongoing to prevent depressing the farm-gate price of palay, which would severely affect farmers’ income.

“I expect that we will have a good harvest this year because of the absence of El Niño. BPI should manage the issuance of SPSIC (sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance),” he said.

Fausto also said the BPI could come up with some innovations to govern the issuance of SPSICs “without appearing to impose import controls.”

The Department of Agriculture or its regulatory bureaus issue import clearances to ensure that imported agricultural products meet standards to protect human, animal or plant health and avoid the spread of pests or diseases. — *Jordeene B. Lagare INQ*

<https://business.inquirer.net/510038/philippines-seen-to-reduce-rice-imports-this-year>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Local producers call for curb on salt imports

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)  
[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:10 AM March 05, 2025

Manila, Philippines – The Philippine Association of Salt Industry Networks Inc. (PhilASIN) said the government must set a cap on salt importation to avoid a glut and arrest declining prices.

“We need to manage the supply importation to prevent oversupply. It applies to all agriculture [products] and it makes sense that it applies to salt,” PhilASIN president Gerard Khonghun said in an interview on Tuesday. During a public consultation held by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in Quezon City, the group suggested that salt importation should require a certification of necessity.

The group noted that the Department of Agriculture (DA) issues such a certificate of necessity to import (CNI) fish, in consultation with the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council and other industry players, to regulate the entry of imported fish and aquatic products.

“This can be an agenda for the Salt Council, ensuring that BFAR first determines [that there is] a shortage in local salt supply before issuing an import permit,” the group said.

PhilASIN raised two concerns during the consultation. One is that prices of salt are so low that a kilo of salt fetches P1.80 in Mindoro. Also, they observed slow sales of locally produced salt.

Initially, the BFAR expressed hesitation about requiring CNI for salt since there is no legal basis for doing so.

However, PhilASIN pointed out that the same measure can be applied to salt since Section 61 of the Philippine Fisheries Code states that importation of fishery products may be done when the DA has certified this as necessary.

The group also cited Section 4 of the same law, which classifies salt among aquatic resources along with fish and other aquatic flora and fauna and other living resources.

Khonghun said the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council the DA’s policymaking body on the fisheries sector, can administer the CNI for salt imports. **INQ**

<https://business.inquirer.net/510041/local-producers-call-for-curb-on-salt-imports>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Abaca fiber production in Bicol gets support from DA's fiber industry office

By: [Connie Calipay](#) - [@inquireidotnet](#)  
Philippine News Agency / 07:12 AM March 05, 2025



(Photo by Angelica Serrano, OJT/PNA)

**LEGAZPI CITY — The Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority in Bicol (PhilFIDA-5) is promoting the fiber production in Bicol.**

In an interview on Tuesday, Brent Baltazar Marbella, PhilFIDA-5 fiber development officer, said they help farmers by linking them directly to processors and providing training on high-quality fiber production.

“We are providing our abaca farmers’ group or associations with direct access to processors or buyers so that they can discuss the right price and the demand needed,” Marbella said.

“We provide technical training on abaca production from establishment to processing and harvesting,” he noted.

“We also continue to give free planting materials, provision of farm equipment, a particular stripping knife, and a spindle stripping machine,” he added.

Marbella said they coordinate with local government units and other national government agencies for financial grants and assistance for the farmers.

“The price of abaca fiber depends on the grade that ranges from P45 to P55 per kilogram for fair grade, while good to excellent goes up to P120 per kilogram,” he said.

The agency has submitted a funding proposal to its mother agency, the Department of Agriculture, for the rehabilitation of the abaca plantation destroyed by weather disturbances Kristine and Pepito in 2024.

In the Bicol Region, Catanduanes leads in fiber production, making 81 percent of all abaca produced in the region, followed by Albay with 11 percent, Camarines Sur with 4 percent, Sorsogon with 1 percent, and Camarines Norte with 0.5 percent.

### **Abaca demo, training**

Meanwhile, the National Museum of the Philippines in Bicol (NMP-Bicol) conducted a two-day workshop about abaca processing and weaving for female participants from Sorsogon as part of its Women's Month celebration.

In an interview also on Tuesday, Jesseshan Aycocho, NMP-Bicol information officer, said the activity aims to highlight women's capacity to extract abaca fiber in the abaca industry, which is traditionally a male-dominated industry.

"If you have observed earlier, we have two women hand-strippers manually extracting abaca fiber through the traditional abaca hand-stripping device," she said.

"We saw that it's a laborious task. But of course, in celebration of women's month, we want to show our participants and the public that women can also do it," she pointed out.

Aycocho said since Bicol is one of the largest producers of abaca, it is important to showcase the tangible and intangible cultural heritage attached to abaca.

*(With reports from Angelica Joyce Serrano and Lily Nocomora, OJTs/PNA)*

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2040584/abaca-fiber-production-in-bicol-gets-support-from-das-fiber-industry-office>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# China, Canada retaliate to Trump tariff war

Agence France-Presse / 10:51 PM March 04, 2025



(FILES) This aerial picture shows containers at Qingdao port, in China's eastern Shandong province on February 17, 2025. Mounting trade wars between the United States and its largest economic partners deepened on March 4, 2025 as US tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China kicked in, sparking swift retaliation from Beijing and Ottawa. (Photo by AFP) / China OUT / CHINA OUT / CHINA OUT

Washington, United States — Mounting trade wars between the United States and its largest economic partners deepened Tuesday as huge US tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China kicked in, sparking swift retaliation from Beijing and Ottawa.

Markets fell in Asia and Europe in response to what analysts said were the steepest tariffs on imports since the 1940s.

Trump had announced — and then paused — blanket 25 percent tariffs on imports from major trading partners Canada and Mexico in February, accusing them of failing to stop illegal immigration and drug trafficking. He pushed ahead with them Tuesday, citing a lack of progress on both fronts.

The duties will hit over \$918 billion in US imports from both countries, and are set to hamper supply chains for key sectors like automobiles and construction materials.

Canada responded with its own retaliatory 25 percent tariffs, while Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said there was no justification for the US move and vowed to hit back with duties of its own.

Trump also inked an order Monday to increase a previously imposed 10 percent tariff on China to 20 percent — piling atop existing levies on various Chinese goods.

Beijing condemned the “unilateral imposition of tariffs by the US” and said it would impose 10 and 15 percent levies on a range of agricultural imports from the United States.

Experts have warned the higher import costs could push up prices for consumers, complicating efforts to bring down inflation.

That includes at grocery stores — Mexico supplied 63 percent of US vegetable imports and nearly half of US fruit and nut imports in 2023, according to the US Department of Agriculture.

Housing costs could also be hit. More than 70 percent of imports of two key materials homebuilders need — softwood lumber and gypsum — come from Canada and Mexico, said the National Association of Home Builders.

Truck drivers at the Otay Mesa border crossing in Mexico told AFP they were already feeling the impact as they waited to cross into the United States early Tuesday.

Work was drying up because many companies in the Mexican border city of Tijuana export Chinese goods, said driver Angel Cervantes.

“And since the tariffs are also against China, work is going down for the (transport) companies,” he added.

### **Fight to ‘the bitter end’**

Ottawa’s retaliatory 25 percent tariffs on \$30 billion of goods went into effect just after midnight Tuesday.

“Canada will not let this unjustified decision go unanswered,” Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said, adding that they would be extended to duties on more than \$150 billion of Canadian goods within weeks.

China’s tariffs will come into effect next week and will impact tens of billions of dollars in imports, from US soybeans to chickens.

China also suspended all imports of US lumber and halted soybean shipments from three US exporters.

Beijing’s foreign ministry vowed to fight a US trade war to the “bitter end.”

European Union trade spokesman Olof Gill warned the tariffs on Canada and Mexico threatened transatlantic “economic stability” and risked disrupting global trade, urging Washington to reverse course.

## **Trump seeks leverage**

Analysts say Trump's tariffs over drugs like fentanyl are a means to tackle socio-economic problems — while providing legal justifications to move quickly — and Washington is also seeking leverage and to rebalance trade ties.

But using emergency economic powers to impose tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China is a novel move.

The Tax Foundation estimates that before accounting for foreign retaliation, tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China this time would each cut US economic output by 0.1 percent.

“We could easily reach the highest effective tariff rate since 1936 by the beginning of 2026,” KPMG chief economist Diane Swonk warned ahead of the tariffs going into effect.

Both consumers and manufacturers stand to bear the costs of additional tariffs, which could diminish demand and trigger layoffs as businesses try to keep costs under control, she told AFP.

<https://business.inquirer.net/510144/china-canada-retaliate-to-trump-tariff-war>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Trade wars intensify as US tariffs on Canada, Mexico, China take force

Agence France-Presse / 06:39 PM March 04, 2025

Washington, United States – Mounting trade wars between the United States and its largest economic partners deepened on Tuesday as US tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China kicked in, sparking swift retaliation from Beijing and Ottawa.

Stinging US tariffs on Canadian and Mexican goods came into effect as a deadline to avert President Donald Trump’s levies passed without the nations striking a deal — a move set to snarl supply chains.

Trade war fears sent markets falling in Asia and Europe on Tuesday in response to what analysts said were its steepest tariffs on imports since the 1940s.

Trump had announced — and then paused — the blanket 25 percent tariffs on imports from major trading partners Canada and Mexico in February, accusing them of failing to stop illegal immigration and drug trafficking.

In pushing ahead with the duties, Trump cited a lack of progress in tackling the flow of drugs like fentanyl into the United States.

The duties stand to impact over \$918 billion worth of US imports from both countries.

The sweeping duties on Canada and Mexico are set to snarl supply chains for key sectors like automobiles and construction materials, risking cost increases to households.

Mexico supplied 63 percent of US vegetable imports and nearly half of US fruit and nut imports in 2023, according to the US Department of Agriculture.

More than 80 percent of US avocados come from Mexico — meaning higher import costs could push up prices for American shoppers.

And the United States imports construction materials from Canada, too, meaning tariffs could drive up housing costs.

More than 70 percent of imports of two key materials homebuilders need — softwood lumber and gypsum — come from Canada and Mexico, said National Association of Home Builders chairman Carl Harris.

Trump also inked an order Monday to increase a previously imposed 10 percent tariff on China to 20 percent — piling atop existing levies on various Chinese goods.

Beijing condemned the “unilateral imposition of tariffs by the US” and swiftly retaliated, saying it would impose 10 and 15 percent levies on a range of agricultural imports from the United States.

China's tariffs will come into effect next week and will impact tens of billions of dollars in imports, from US soybeans to chickens.

Beijing's foreign ministry vowed to fight a US trade war to the "bitter end."

"The Chinese people will not be intimidated," spokesman Lin Jian said.

And after Trump earlier announced tariffs on EU products would be 25 percent, France's Economy Minister Eric Lombard called for the European Union to reach a "balanced deal" with Washington.

Economists caution that tariffs could raise consumer prices while weighing on growth and employment.

The Tax Foundation estimates that before accounting for foreign retaliation, tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China this time would each cut US economic output by 0.1 percent.

This could complicate Trump's efforts to fulfill his campaign promises of lowering prices for Americans.

Former US officials see Trump's tariffs over drugs like fentanyl as a means to tackle socio-economic problems — while providing legal justifications to move quickly.

Washington is also seeking leverage and to rebalance trade ties, analysts say.

But using emergency economic powers to impose tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China is a novel move, and could trigger lawsuits.

### **US tariffs won't 'go unanswered'**

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Monday pledged to impose retaliatory 25 percent tariffs on Washington, saying in a statement: "Canada will not let this unjustified decision go unanswered."

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said her country has contingency plans.

If Trump continues with his tariff plans, KPMG chief economist Diane Swonk warned ahead of them going into effect: "We could easily reach the highest effective tariff rate since 1936 by the beginning of 2026."

Both consumers and manufacturers stand to bear the costs of additional tariffs, which could diminish demand and trigger layoffs as businesses try to keep costs under control, she told AFP.

Robert Dietz, chief economist at the National Association of Home Builders, told AFP the group expects a possible "combined duty tariff rate of above 50 percent on Canadian lumber" as proposed duties add up.

Even as the United States also plans to expand forestry, Dietz said, prices will likely rise in the short-run.

<https://business.inquirer.net/510014/trade-wars-intensify-as-us-tariffs-on-canada-mexico-and-china-take-force>



## BUSINESS WORLD:

# Rice MSRP expected to drop to P45 per kilo

March 4, 2025 | 8:58 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/EDD GUMBAN

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is expecting a further drop in the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of rice due to declining global rice prices and strengthening of the peso.

The government may bring the MSRP to P45 per kilo for imported rice varieties consisting of 5% broken grains in late March from P49, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. told reporters late Monday.

The peso closed at P57.90 to the dollar on Monday, strengthening from its P57.995 on Friday finish.

Mr. Laurel in late February said the DA will apply the MSRP “more selectively” since the prices of imported rice “were already lower than the MSRP” in “some provinces.”

The first MSRP was set at P58 per kilo on Jan. 20.

The retail price for 5% broken rice was P62-P64 per kilo before the MSRP order, which Mr. Laurel said has been effective in influencing market prices.

The government lowered the tariff on rice imports to 15% last year, promising “substantial drops” in rice prices by January.

“From vegetables to rice, prices have declined,” Mr. Laurel said. “Our MSRP is really working.”

The DA declared a national rice emergency, citing an “extraordinary” spike in the prices of the staple grain despite lower tariffs for imports.

A food security emergency declaration — a power given to the DA under Republic Act 12708 or the Agricultural Tariffication Act — triggers the release of rice reserves from National Food Authority warehouses to stabilize prices.

Rice imports hit an all-time high of nearly 4.7 million metric tons in 2024, in the face of inadequate domestic production.

In mid-January, Mr. Laurel said the government does not plan to rely as heavily on imports to bring down high rice prices, which he said are also caused by profiteering. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/03/04/657262/rice-msrp-expected-to-drop-to-p45-per-kilo/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Banana industry competitiveness eroding as PHL loses position as top supplier to China

March 4, 2025 | 8:58 pm



**BW FILE PHOTO**

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

THE displacement of the Philippines by Vietnam as the top banana supplier to China reflects the Philippine banana industry's declining competitiveness, as well as weak Chinese demand and the impact of plant diseases, analysts and agriculture industry officials said.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Chief Economist Michael L. Ricafort said China's banana imports last year declined by about 4%, though Vietnam grabbed more market share due to its "lower labor costs and overall cost of living that led to lower prices."

The International Trade Centre, an arm of the World Trade Organization, reported that China's banana imports from the Philippines hit a 15-year low in 2024 of 463,306 metric tons. Vietnam's banana exports to China, meanwhile, rose 24% to 625,166 MT.

Mr. Ricafort cited Vietnam's proximity to China, which helps cut logistics costs in the face of high fuel prices. "I think the decline is a result of a combination of the effects of the sigatoka and Panama plant disease and emergence of competing suppliers like Vietnam, which is very competitive and enjoys lower banana tariffs," Federation of Free Farmers National Director Raul Q. Montemayor said via Viber.

Philippine banana exports overall fell 2.97% to 2.28 MT in 2024, ceding its position as the third-leading banana exporter.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) at that time noted that Philippine supplies continued to be affected by "the spread of TR4," a variety of Panama disease or fusarium wilt.

The Tropical Race 4 strain, a soil-borne fungal disease that deprives bananas of minerals, nutrients, and moisture, was first detected in Davao City in 2009 and still threatens the Cavendish banana, the main export variety.

“Geopolitics and competitiveness has a lot to do with Philippines losing its market share,” according to Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chairman George T. Barcelon, former chairman of the Philippine Exporters Confederation, Inc. He did not elaborate.

Mr. Ricafort said geopolitical risks are also playing a part due to ongoing tensions between the Philippines and China in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost in its entirety.

“The dispute partly led to lower demand for Philippine exports such as bananas,” he said.

China is the Philippines’ largest source of imports and the second-biggest market for exports. Two-way trade hit \$41 billion in 2023.

Mr. Ricafort cited the flare-up of tensions in 2012, when China imposed what industry representatives called “unbelievably” tight quarantine rules for Philippine fruit products, with Beijing allegedly detecting mealy bugs in Philippines fruit.

“Whenever there were tensions in the past, China would resort to phytosanitary requirements to prevent some Philippine fruit exports to China, causing Philippine products to rot in ports,” he said.

The quarantine restrictions followed a standoff at Scarborough Shoal, although government officials said at the time that phytosanitary issues had surfaced even before the conflict.

“Panama disease is more manageable than the loss of warmer bilateral relations between the Philippines and China, which is driven by the geopolitical dynamics brought about by the Taiwan issue that pits the US and its allies against China,” according to retired agriculture professor Roy S. Kempis, who heads the Center for Business Innovation at Angeles University Foundation.

“The Philippines is directly on the receiving end as well as a victim of collateral damage,” he said via Viber.

“While we have the best tasting bananas in the world, the reality is, this can be ignored by China for geopolitical vengeance and gain.”

Mr. Kempis said moving forward, the logical step is to find alternative markets for Philippine bananas.

Mr. Ricafort said another key market for Philippine bananas is South Korea, with which Manila recently signed a free trade agreement.

The deal allows the Philippines to export fresh bananas to South Korea at zero duty by January 2028, “with tariffs starting at 24% upon entry, falling to 18% by January 2025,” according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

Philippine banana market share in South Korea fell 11 percentage points between January and August 2024.

The FAO said in January that Philippine exports to China and Japan declined last year due to a shortfall in domestic supply, noting that only 51,000 hectares out of the 89,000 hectares of land available for banana cultivation were operational.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2025/03/04/657260/banana-industry-competitiveness-eroding-as-phl-loses-position-as-top-supplier-to-china/>

# House food superpanel urges NFA to buy 20% of harvest

- **Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz**
- **March 4, 2025**

THE House of Representatives' Murang Pagkain Supercommittee on Tuesday proposed that the National Food Authority (NFA) buy at least 20 percent of locally produced palay this harvest season as it also called on government agencies to step up their oversight in order to stop traders from manipulating farmgate prices.

Quezon Rep. Mark Enverga, who chairs the House Committee on Agriculture and Food and co-chairs the House Murang Pagkain Supercommittee, noted that in past harvest seasons, particularly from September to October, some farmers were compelled to sell their palay at prices as low as P14 to P18 per kilogram—well below sustainable levels. “We must ensure that our farmers receive fair compensation while keeping rice prices affordable for consumers,” Enverga emphasized as the rice harvest season fast approaches from March to May.

Recent data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) indicates that the average farmgate price of dry palay was P20.69 per kilogram in January 2025. However, without stricter oversight, unscrupulous traders may once again manipulate prices during the upcoming harvest.

Enverga also urged the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the NFA to step up monitoring and actively intervene in price stabilization.

He proposed that the NFA purchase at least 20 percent of locally produced rice this harvest season to help ensure fairer prices for farmers.

“If the NFA buys a larger share of the harvest, traders will have less control over dictating prices. Competition in purchasing will guarantee farmers a stable income,” he explained.

To further curb price manipulation, Enverga recommended implementing a real-time digital price monitoring system that would make farmgate prices more transparent and accessible.

“There must be a clear pricing mechanism so that farmers are not deceived. With a price tracking system, we can immediately identify those engaging in price manipulation,” Enverga added.

While ensuring affordable consumer prices remains a priority, Enverga stressed that reducing reliance on rice imports is the key long-term solution. He advocated for expanded fertilizer subsidies, improved post-harvest facilities, and mechanization programs to lower production costs and enhance local rice production.

“The solution is not just about making rice cheap but ensuring sufficient local production. We cannot rely on imported rice forever—we must support our own farmers,” he said.

He also emphasized the urgency of enforcing Republic Act 12022, or the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, signed into law in September 2024.

The law gives the government stronger legal tools to dismantle cartels, penalize hoarders, and stop price manipulation. It imposes severe penalties, including life imprisonment and hefty fines, for those found guilty of economic sabotage. Enverga called on the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Enforcement Group to immediately draft and implement a clear, enforceable framework to crack down on price-fixing and ensure that profiteering at the expense of both farmers and consumers is eradicated.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/04/house-food-superpanel-urges-nfa-to-buy-20-of-harvest/>

**BUSINESS MIRROR:**

# Rice imports at end of February totaled 504,726 MT

- Ada Pelonia
- March 4, 2025



**A worker at a rice warehouse in Divisoria, Manila, takes a break from loading rice sacks onto a truck.**

Rice import arrivals breached 500,000 metric tons (MT) as of end-February, according to the latest government data.

Figures from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) showed that 504,726.708 MT of rice shipments entered the country as of February 27.

Rice imports in February stood at 227,186.02 MT, 33.49 percent lower than the 341,585.69 MT recorded in the same period last year.

Of the volume that arrived in the Philippines, BPI data indicated that 370,908.42 MT came from Vietnam, the country's top supplier of the food staple.

This was followed by Pakistan, accounting for 60,788.68 MT, and Thailand at 53,722.75 MT.

The South Asian nation dislodged Thailand as the Philippines's second-largest supplier.

The Philippines also received stocks from other countries, such as Myanmar (11,315.00 MT), India (5,991.86 MT), and South Korea (2,000 MT).

Data from the BPI indicated that the agency approved and issued 937 sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs) for the purchase of 722,201 MT of imported rice.

Rice importers are required to secure an SPSIC from the BPI to ensure that every inbound shipment is safe for human and animal consumption.

The country's imported rice shipments hit 4.78 million metric tons (MMT) in 2024, nearly 33 percent higher than the 3.6 MMT imported in 2023.

Department of Agriculture (DA) official and industry sources said stunted palay output, lower tariffs, damage from ill-effects of El Niño, and anti-smuggling efforts catapulted the country's rice imports to an all-time high in 2024.

Paddy rice output last year shrank by 4.85 percent to 19.09 MMT from 20.06 MMT in 2023, based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

The DA said that local farmers, fishers and livestock raisers lost P15.30 billion due to El Niño last year.

Meanwhile, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recorded a decline in global export prices in January, with Vietnamese prices falling by \$55 to \$394 per MT while Thai prices declined by \$57 to \$437 per MT with fewer sales to Indonesia.

"Pakistani quotes decreased \$52 to \$400 per MT and Indian quotes fell \$34 to \$410 per MT as India's return to the export market continues to create downward pressure on global prices."

It added that US prices dropped \$30 to \$697 per MT due to weaker sales to Latin America, while Uruguayan prices fell \$32 to \$668 per MT as buyers wait for the harvest of the new crop.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/03/04/rice-imports-at-end-of-february-totaled-504726-mt/>

**MANILA STANDARD:**

# DA predicts further decline in rice prices

NewsNational



Courtesy: Department of Agriculture

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) foresees a decrease in the price of rice across the country with the strengthening of the peso and the “continuous decline” of the cereal’s prices in the world market.

“Our plan, if this trend continues, by March 31, we might drop the price of imported rice to P45 per kilo,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. disclosed.

- Advertisement -

He pointed out that the Philippine peso gained against the dollar from P59 to P57 exchange rate.

The price of five percent broken rice from India was set at \$425.4 per metric ton (MT); \$416 per MT for Vietnam rice; and \$458.7 per MT of 25 percent broken for Thailand rice as of January, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

The current maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for five percent broken imported rice was set at P49/kg. on March 1, the fourth reduction since the first MSRP was imposed at P58/kg. on Jan. 20.

Prior to the MSRP implementation, the retail price ranged from P62/kg. to P64/kg.

Laurel said the MSRP has been effective in influencing market prices.

“From vegetables to rice, prices are declining, our MSRP is really working,” He noted.

As of Monday, the prevailing price of premium imported rice in Metro Manila was pegged at P52/kg. P44 to P47 for imported well-milled; and P36 to P46 for imported regular milled.

The price of local premium rice ranges from P45 to P62, P42 to P52 for local well-milled, and P38 to P45 for local regular milled.

Meanwhile, Laurel scored critics of the government’s efforts to address food inflation.

“The two analysts, I think what they said is very unfair. The past administration’s era was different from today’s.

Truth be told; what is happening today comes from the lapses of the previous administration,” he said.

Besides the declining vegetable and rice prices, Laurel said the retail prices of fish would also go down within the month.

“Fishing season has begun. So, hopefully, there will be a good catch all over the Philippines, small, medium, and large,” he said.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314564670/da-predicts-further-decline-in-rice-prices.html>

## MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT:

# PH ready to ink \$1B World Bank loan for agri-fishery

March 5, 2025

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is set to sign in July the \$1-billion Philippine Sustainable Agricultural Transformation (PSAT) loan program with the World Bank.

PSAT is a five-year initiative that seeks to strengthen the country's agri-fishery sector.

When the loan documents have been signed, PSAT will be carried out in August, DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement released on Tuesday.

DA Undersecretary Arnel De Mesa said in an interview yesterday the project proposal will be submitted to the Department of Finance (DOF) next week.

De Mesa said the project loan is subject to disbursement-linked indicators (DLIs), or results that the Philippines has to meet.

Each indicator is equivalent to a certain amount, which will be released to the Philippine Treasury once met, De Mesa said.

Tiu Laurel said he met with World Bank officials led by country director Zafer Mustafaoglu on February 10.

The meeting reviewed the progress and key aspects of the PSAT, the first project under the Bank's Program-for-Results (PforR) financing framework.

Tiu Laurel said Mustafaoglu reaffirmed the World Bank's commitment to signing the PSAT loan program.

The signing in July will coincide with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s fourth State of the Nation Address.

The DA said the program involves climate-responsive strategies, policy reforms, diversification and enhanced fiscal management.

De Mesa said the DA has committed to certain indicators such as the issuance of an administrative order (AO) that diversifies the country's rice areas, or an AO that limits the seeds to be used by farmers to ensure crops are dried properly.

PSAT aims to improve the efficiency of government spending while ensuring sustainable outcomes by building institutional capacity and strengthening governance, it said.

Tiu Laurel assured the World Bank of continued collaboration to ensure the success of PSAT and contribute to the country's agricultural development and food security goals.

"This multi-year loan from the World Bank will provide us with the critical resources needed to advance the government's food security agenda and promote sustainable agriculture—key drivers of development in the countryside that will uplift the lives of millions who depend on farming and fishery," Tiu Laurel said.

Tiu Laurel and Mustafaoglu also discussed the Technical Assistance for Sustainable Agricultural Transformation (TASAT), a \$15-million grant funded by the United Kingdom. TASAT will support the DA in implementing the PSAT by enhancing internal audits, evaluating resource use alternatives, assessing sectoral transformation, and expanding the availability of improved planting materials for high-value crops.

This supplementary funding, processed through the Philippine government system, will have to be endorsed by the Department of Finance and the National Economic and Development Authority through the Development Budget Coordination Committee. Irma Isip

<https://malaya.com.ph/business/business-news/ph-ready-to-ink-1b-world-bank-loan-for-agri-fishery/>

**MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT:**

# **NFA sees low LGU participation in affordable rice program due to poor logistics, red tape**

By *Irma Isip* March 5, 2025

Local government units (LGUs) have registered low participation in the country's affordable rice program because of red tape, lack of funds and logistics, the National Food Authority (NFA) said on Tuesday.

"Each LGU has its own challenge. Some have funds, and some need to get a resolution from their Sanggunian – mostly procedural," NFA Administrator Larry Lacson said in an interview on the state-sponsored Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon television program of PTV-4.

NFA is selling rice to LGUs at P33 per kilogram (kg), but cannot go lower than that, and local governments may set their selling price only up to P35 per kg.

"At P33 per kg, the subsidy is already huge. For now, we cannot bring down the price of NFA rice any further," Lacson said.

"All (NFA) branches nationwide are accepting inquiries and letters of intent from LGUs," Lacson said.

The food agency is coordinating with the Food Terminal Inc. on the transport of rice stock from NFA warehouses so consumers can benefit from the rice program, he added.

Seventy LGUs are interested in buying NFA rice, but the food agency could only commit firm allocations to San Juan City, Navotas and Camarines Sur.

Cotabato City and Bacolod City have contacted the NFA regarding affordable rice stock.

In the case of San Juan, only 1,000 bags have so far been released out of the 8,000 50-kg bags the city has ordered, Lacson said.

Another 1,000 bags have been released as well to Navotas, he said.

"We are still hoping for a nationwide distribution of rice at an affordable price," Lacson added.

As the harvest season in April draws near, the NFA assured all stakeholders that palay or unhusked rice bought from farmers will be milled right away to make as much as 35 percent of warehouse space available to receive newly harvested rice.

The NFA also plans to lease warehouses of private companies and cooperatives, and make space for incoming rice stock, Lacson said.

<https://malaya.com.ph/business/corporate/nfa-sees-low-lgu-participation-in-affordable-rice-program-due-to-poor-logistics-red-tape/>



**THE MANILA TIMES:**

# A billionaire's (agri modernization) folly



**By Marlen V. Ronquillo**

**March 5, 2025**

LARRY Ellison of Oracle, ranked by global wealth trackers as the fourth richest person in the world, built his own version of agricultural utopia in the Hawaiian island of Lanai eight years ago. He put up, then lavishly funded, a firm called Sensei Ag with the dream of revolutionizing agricultural production through the tool he was most familiar with, which also made him one of the richest persons on the planet: technology.

Ellison wanted to leave a legacy to the food-short parts of the world, especially the famine-stricken parts of Africa. Sensei Ag's revolutionary food production would provide that legacy. Or so, Ellison hoped.

Sensei Ag hewed to the ethos of Silicon Valley, which was to "move fast and break things." Instead of blending with the overall agricultural and natural environs of Lanai, which is what farmers like myself do when raising either animals or crops, Sensei Ag predictably deployed all the fancy toys of technology to prove, well, that tech can always bulldoze its way to achieve its dream of agricultural modernization. Bypassing all the known traditional practices of agricultural productivity.

According to newspaper accounts, Sensei Ag used AI to develop superior crop varieties, sensors to monitor field conditions and developments and robots to do the crop harvesting. Sensei Ag's eight-year effort to turn around agricultural production at a cost of more than half a billion dollars — more than what Ellison paid to buy the Lanai island — has been summed up by a Wall Street Journal analysis using a single word: bust. All the sensors, robots and AI tools deployed by Sensei have proven ineffective in the challenging environs of Lanai.

The failures were failures at the fundamental level. The co-founder of Ellison, according to news reports on the Sensei Ag bust, was a celebrity doctor who was not familiar with conditions on the island nor with agricultural methods and techniques. Tapped to run Sensei were not veteran agriculturists that Hawaii turns out in substantial numbers every year; the University of Hawaii at Manoa has been a leading training ground for agriculturists and agriculture technicians in the US and started out as an agricultural college. They were tech veterans trained in writing codes and doing hardcore tech engineering with "zero agriculture experience."

AI, to their frustration, failed to provide the instructions on how to build the greenhouses needed; the greenhouses built were too brittle for the wind conditions of Lanai. Wi-Fi was often spotty. Robotics, even the most modern version, was not applicable to the type of crop harvesting in Lanai.

Under such productivity conditions, not even the smartest algorithms written by the smartest tech bros, would apply.

Eight years is eternity to tech overlords wanting breakthroughs. Tech startups are normally given a year or two to succeed. Or the funding vanishes. Now, after eight agonizing years, the tenability of the whole experiment is in question.

Filipino farmers like myself are now reminded of Sensei's "bust" because something similar is taking place in the Philippine agricultural context. Eerily and depressingly familiar parallels.

The Department of Agriculture is led by Francisco Tiu Laurel, a billionaire fishing magnate with no background in agricultural productivity. And he is currently preoccupied with introducing unapplicable

technology into an agricultural setting that needs, first and foremost, to fix the basic problems like irrigation, credit, extension support, and comprehensive land zoning to find out what crops are ideal for each agricultural region. I am 72 and most of the farmers in my community are a bit younger or older, which means that the young people that need to work in agriculture to inject fresh blood into a prostrate sector would rather spend dreary hours bagging groceries at supermarkets for below the minimum wage pay than farm. Or, die trying to get those fruit-picking jobs overseas.

That average age of the Filipino farmer is by itself a symptom of a cancer that currently afflicts Philippine agriculture. The agriculture sector is nothing but a shell of its vibrant self, inexorably marching to irreversible regression.

Unmindful or ignorant of the fact that the once functioning institutions of the Department of Agriculture are now broken, Tiu Laurel is speaking of "drones" of "digitization," of "modern seaports" in a flailing and failing attempt to demonstrate that he is doing something to modernize Philippine agriculture. Not just the fresh coat of paint applied to the Potemkin villages but the unabated exuberant chutzpah of presenting agriculture — never mind the rotting core — as a sector with new and bright shiny tech toys and steeped in the culture of modernity. The sheen of modernity to obscure the rotten core.

The only difference is that while Ellison and company have been dipping into their own pockets to pursue their agri utopia, billionaire Tiu-Laurel has been using government money. He has more than a dozen sidekicks, a posse of assistant secretaries and undersecretaries as clueless as himself, and also paid for by taxpayers money.

I have written about this before, the efforts of Tiu Laurel to apply a technology sheen to hide the rotting carcass of the agri sector. Its headline was "Putting the cart before the horse," and the main point was about the billionaire DA head who can't even get his priorities right

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/03/05/opinion/columns/a-billionaires-agri-modernization-folly/2066829>

**REMATE:**

## **DA: Rice MSRP posibleng bumaba sa P45/kilo sa pagtatapos ng Marso**

March 4, 2025 15:36



MANILA, Philippines- Maaaring bumaba ang maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) para sa bigas bunsod ng patuloy na pagbaba ng global rice prices at paglakas ng piso.

“Ang plano namin kung tuluy-tuloy ang trend na ito, by March 31, baka ibaba namin sa P45 ang kilo ng imported rice, 5 percent broken,” ang sinabi ni Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Ang pahayag na ito ng Kalihim ay dahil sa paglakas ng piso laban sa dolyar sa P57 level, mas malakas kaysa sa P59-level.

“The price of 5 percent broken rice from India was set at USD425.4 per metric ton (MT); USD416 per MT of Vietnam rice; and USD458.7 per MT of 25 percent broken Thailand rice as of January,” ayon sa Food and Agriculture Organization ng United Nations.

Sa kabilang dako, ang kasalukuyang MSRP para sa 5% broken imported rice ay itinakda sa P49/kg. noong Marso 1, ika-apat na pagbawas simula nang unang ikasa ang MSRP sa halagang P58/kg. noong Jan. 20.

Bago pa ang implementasyon ng MSRP, ang retail price para sa 5% broken imported rice ay P62/kg. hanggang P64/kg.

Sinabi pa ni Tiu Laurel na ang MSRP ay mabisa sa sa pag-impluwensya sa market prices.

“From vegetables to rice, bumababa na rin ang presyo, iyong MSRP natin is really working,” ayon kay Tiu Laurel.

Hanggang nitong Lunes, nanaig ang presyo ng premium imported rice sa Metro Manila sa halagang P52/kg., umaabot sa halagang mula P48/kg. hanggang P55/kg.; P44/kg. hanggang P47/kg. para sa imported well-milled; at P36/kg. hanggang P46/kg. para sa imported regular milled.

Ang presyo ng local premium rice, ay umaabot naman sa halagang mula P45/kg. hanggang P62/kg.; P42/kg. hanggang P52/kg. para sa local well-milled; at P38/kg. hanggang P45/kg. para sa local regular milled.

Samantala, binuweltahan naman ng Kalihim ang pag-iingay ng mga kritiko ng gobyerno na tugunan ang food inflation.

“Iyong dalawang analysts, I think what they said is very unfair. Iba iyong panahon ng past administration, iba iyong panahon ngayon. Sa totoo lang, iyong mga nangyayari ngayon for me kasalanan ng previous administration,” anito.

Maliban sa pagbaba ng presyo ng gulay at bigas, tinuran ni Tiu Laurel na ang retail price ng isda ay bababa rin sa loob ng buwan.

“Fishing season is umpisa na. So, hopefully, marami ang huli ng fishermen from all over the Philippines, small, medium, and large,” pahayag niya.

“Hopefully, by mid to end of March, mas malaki ang ibaba ng presyo ng isda,” dagdag ng opisyal. **Kris Jose**

<https://remate.ph/da-rice-msrp-posibleng-bumaba-sa-p45-kilo-sa-pagtatapos-ng-marso/>

**REMATE:**

# P200M ismagel na isda, kinumpiska ng BOC

March 4, 2025 09:23



MANILA, Philippines – TINATAYANG nasa mahigit P200 milyon halaga ng mga ismagel na isda mula China ang kinumpiska ng mga tauhan ng Bureau of Customs (BOC) makaraang magsagawa ng operasyon sa Port of Manila nitong Marso 3, 2025.

Pinangunahan ni BOC Commissioner Bienvenido Y. Rubio, kasama si Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr., at District Collector Alexander Gerard E. Alviar ang isinagawang inspeksyon sa 19 na fourty-foot container na idineklarang naglalaman frozen fried taro ngunit nang magsagawa ng pisikal na pagsusuri ay tumambad ang mga frozen mackerel at mga galunggong.

Nauna dito, ang mga nasabing container na nagmula sa China ay itinigil noong Enero 20, 2025, pagkatapos makatanggap ng kahilingan para sa intrusive at non-intrusive examination mula sa Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (CIIS-POM), kasunod ng parehong kahilingan mula sa Plant Quarantine Service-Bureau of Plant Industry (PQS-BPI) dahil sa nakabinbing pagsunod sa mga kinakailangan ng PQS.

Noong Pebrero 13, 2025, isang alert order ang inilabas ng District Office Collector laban sa pagpapadala ng kargamento upang magsagawa ng karagdagang pagsisiyasat.

Sa pagsasagawa ng pisikal na pagsusuri na sinaksihan ng mga kinauukulang partido noong Pebrero 18 at 19, 2025, agad na iniutos ni District Collector Alviar ang pagpapalabas ng Warrant of Seizure and Detention (WSD) para sa paglabag sa Section 1113 kaugnay ng Section 1400 ng Customs Modernization and Tariff Act (CMTA).

Pinuri naman ni Commissioner Rubio ang sama-samang pagsisikap ng BOC-POM, DA, at iba pang kinauukulang tanggapan para sa pagtiyak na ang lahat ng mga kargamento ay sumusunod sa mga regulasyong nagpoprotekta sa parehong mga mamimili at industriya ng agrikultura ng bansa.

Nabatid na matapos maidokumento ang mga nakumpiskang isda para sa pagsasampa ng kaso sa mga smuggler ay isasailalim ito sa eksaminasyon ng DA kung maaari itong kainin ng tao.

Sakaling makapasa at ideklara itong “fit for human consumption”, ibibigay ang mga nakumpiskang isda sa Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) para ipamigay sa mga nangangailangan. **JAY**

***Reyes***

<https://remate.ph/p200m-ismagel-na-isda-kinumpiska-ng-boc/>

**ABANTE TONITE:**

# ‘Pinas mangungutang ng P58B

ABANTE TONITE

- **March 4, 2025**



#image\_title

Mangungutang ang Pilipinas ng \$1 bilyon (P58 bilyon) mula sa World Bank para sa limang-taong Philippine Sustainable Agricultural Transformation (PSAT) Program para mapaunlad at mapalakas ang agrikultura.

Ayon sa Department of Agriculture (DA), nagpulong ang mga opisyal ng World Bank (WB) at si Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. para pag-usapan ang bagong pautang na itataon malapit sa Hulyo para sa ikaapat na State of the Nation Address (SONA) ni Pangulong Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ Marcos Jr.

Nakatakdang aprubahan ng World Bank Board ang PSAT sa Hunyo 5, 2025. Ayon sa World Bank, hindi pa ganap na naaabot ng Pilipinas ang potensiyal nito sa agrikultura dahil sa patakaran ng pamahalaan.

“While the level of agricultural support provided by the government is high in international terms, its growth impact is blunted by the production- and trade-distorting effects of the policy instruments used,” ayon sa World Bank.

Ang istruktura ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang isa sa mga dahilan kung bakit hindi napauunlad ang agrikultura, ayon sa World Bank. May walong bureaus, sampung attached agencies, pitong attached

corporations, at labinlimang regional field offices ang DA at magkakaiba ang layunin nila sa isa't isa habang nag-aagawan sila sa budget.

Ayon sa DA, ilulunsad ang PSAT sa Agosto at ito ang unang proyekto ng Pilipinas sa ilalim ng Program-for-Results financing framework ng WB kung saan obligado ang nangungutang na pamahalaan na maging masinop sa gastusin at maging epektibo sa paggastos habang tinitiyak na makakamit ang mga layunin.

(Eileen Mencias)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/03/04/pinas-mangungutang-ng-p58b/>



**ABANTE TONITE:**

# **NFA uupa ng bodega bago ang anihan**

ABANTE TONITE

- **March 4, 2025**



Plano ng National Food Authority (NFA) na umupa ng mga pribadong warehouses para magamit sa nalalapit na anihan ng palay.

Sa Bagong Pilipinas public briefing, sinabi ni NFA Administrator Larry Lacson na maraming local government units ang gustong bumili ng bigas sa ahensiya subalit ang nagpapatagal ay ang proseso ng LGUs at kawalan ng sapat na pondo.

a ang pagpapalabas ng bigas sa kanilang mga bodega sa kabila ng deklarasyon ng food security emergency ng Department of Agriculture.

Iba-iba aniya ang kinakaharap na pagsubok ng mga LGU para makabili ng bigas sa NFA tulad na lamang ng kakapusan ng pondo at ang iba naman ay kailangan ng resolusyon para payagang bumili sa NFA.

“Iba-ibang LGU iba-ibang challenges – some have no funds, some ay kailangan ng resolution sa sanggunian. Mostly procedural no, iyong nakikita nating mga dahilan,” ani Lacson. (Aileen Taliping)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2025/03/04/nfa-uupa-ng-bodega-bago-ang-anihan/>

**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:**

# Pagpapababa sa presyo ng bigas, agricultural products, isusulong

**Mer Layson** - Pilipino Star Ngayon

March 5, 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 — Nangako si ATeacher Partylist Virginia Rodriguez na isusulong ang mga inisyatiba para mapabuti pa ang edukasyon at mapababa ang presyo ng pangunahing bilingin sa bansa kabilang ang bigas at iba pang agricultural products.

Si Rodriguez, na author ng librong “Leave Nobody Hungry,” ay eksperto sa pagpapababa ng presyo ng pangunahing bilingin bunsod na rin ng kaniyang kaalaman sa agricultural output ng bansa. Siya ay negosyante at philanthropist, na naging kauna-unahang Filipina na nagsulong ng cancer-free nation at sa pamamagitan ng paglikha ng organic vitamins para makatulong labanan ang sakit na cancer.

Ayon kay Rodriguez, bahagi ng mga programa ng ATeachers Partylist ang paghihikayat na gumamit ng organic fertilizers at pagpapatupad ng modern agricultural techniques.

Target din ni Rodriguez na mas mapagbuti ang imprastraktura sa bansa at ang mga kalsada patungo sa mga paaralan.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2025/03/05/2426022/pagpapababa-sa-presyo-ng-bigasagricultural-products-isusulong>

**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:**

# **AGAP: Sangkot sa P202 milyong mackarel smuggling, kasuhan ng Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act**

**Joy Cantos - Pilipino Star Ngayon**

March 5, 2025 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Inihayag kahapon ng grupo ng mga magsasaka partikular ang Agricultural Sector Alliance of the Philippines, Inc (AGAP) Partylist na dapat kasuhan ang mga sangkot sa pagpupuslit ng P202-milyong frozen mackarel sa bagong batas na Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act.

Ayon kay AGAP Partylist Rep. Nicanor “Nikki” Briones, kung siya ang tatanungin pasok ito sa Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, na non-bailable, lifetime imprisonment, 5 times ang multa at dapat nakakulong ang mga sangkot dito at malinaw na sakop ito ng naturang batas.

“Dapat ang enforcement group ng Economic Sabotage Council tulad ng NBI, PNP at Philippine Coast Guard ang manguna sa pagsasagawa ng malalimang imbestigasyon sa mga nahuling kargamento para magkaalaman na,” wika ni Briones.

Sinabi ng Customs na nagpalabas sila ng Warrant of Seizure and Detention (WSD) para sa paglabag sa Section 1113 kaugnay ng Section 1400 ng Customs Modernization and Tariff Act (CMTA).

Ayon kay Briones, dapat kasuhan ng Customs ang mga salarin sa ilalim ng Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act at hindi sa CMTA dahil wala namang nakukulong simula nang maging batas ito dahil Customs ang nag-iimbestiga at nagpapa-file ng kaso. Aniya, maniniwala ang marami na hindi magkakalakas ng loob ang mga smuggler kung walang kasabwat sa loob ng Customs.

Aniya, bakit hindi i-turn over ng BOC sa NBI o Economic Sabotage Council ang kaso nang kaagad makulong ang mga nahuling smuggler.

Sa kabila nito, pinuri naman ni Briones ang ginawang pagpupursige nina Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. at Asec. Domingo Panganiban para imbestigahan ang nasabat na 19 fourty-foot container na frozen mackerel na misdeclared bilang frozen fried taro na naka-hold sa BOC simula pa noong Enero 20, 2025

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/probinsiya/2025/03/05/2426055/agap-sangkot-sa-p202-milyong-mackarel-smuggling-kasuhan-ng-anti-agricultural-economic-sabotage-act>