

**CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY, APRIL 06, 2024**

**A. SEC. FTL Jr. QUOTED**

**MANILA BULLETIN**

**DA says P20/ kilo rice still an aspiration amid El Niño**

**PEOPLE'S JOURNAL**

**DA aims for more, cheaper rice**

**B. DA FAMILY**

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

**DA sees no redux of rice price caps**

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

**COA: Mountain Province LGU awarded projects to banned firm**

**Negros town to be placed under state of calamity**

**Editorial: Rice sufficiency**

**Across the Country: BFAR: No fish kill in Pangasinan**

**ABANTE TONITE**

**Agri exec binutata price cap sa bigas**

**ABANTE**

**Fish kill sa Pangasinan pinabulaanan**

**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON**

**SRP sa bigas 'di irerekomenda ng DA**

**C. AGRI-RELATED STORY**

**THE MANILA TIMES**

**World food prices rise in March: FAO**

**MANILA BULLETIN**

***Photo:* Stable Market Situation**

**BUSINESS MIRROR**

**El Niño, a threat to fisheries, marine biodiversity**

**PEOPLE'S JOURNAL**

**Global food prices up after 7-month downward trend**

**PH mango shipment to Australia resumes**

**Taming inflation**

**D. FOREIGN STORY**

***No stories***



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## DA says ₱20/kilo rice still an aspiration amid El Niño

By JEL SANTOS

With the ₱2.63 billion damage incurred by the country's agriculture sector, the Department of Agriculture (DA) on Saturday, April 6, admitted that the ₱20 per kilo rice aspiration of President Marcos is still difficult to attain.

Marcos, during his presidential campaign, said he was aspiring to bring down the price of rice to ₱20 per kilo.

"The ₱20 per kilo rice remains the department's aspiration, although nowadays it remains quite difficult to attain," Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, DA spokesperson, said during a news forum in Quezon City.

Although there is still a long road ahead to attaining such an ambitious goal, the agency official said the plans and activities of the DA are geared toward lowering the price of the primary staple.

"Our plans and activities are geared toward reducing the cost to produce rice and for us to be competitive in the future," he said.

De Mesa noted that the cost to produce rice in the Philippines remains very high and that makes it more difficult to attain the chief executive's goal.

"If our neighboring countries can reduce the cost of production, we will also do that," he said.

Based on the DA monitoring on April 5, the price of local rice in Metro Manila ranges from ₱46 to ₱68 per kilo.

**'Rice prices may not go down'**

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. had earlier said prices of rice in the country may not go down despite the harvest season and price downswing in the global market. He said this is due the agricultural damage caused by the El Niño phenomenon.



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## DA aims for more, cheaper rice

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is working double time to increase the level of rice production in the Philippines with lower expenditures to alleviate the burden of global inflation in other food and non-food products, particularly rice.

In a news forum in Quezon City, DA Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa said the government will use greater mechanization and efficient post-harvest processes to boost agricultural activity in the country.

"So, ngayon ang tutok pa rin namin ngayon ay sa palayan na mapataas ang lebel ng produksiyon at mapababa iyong cost to produce, again sa pamamagitan ng mechanization at mapababarin iyong post-harvest losses kaya iyon ang tinututukan



din ni Secretary Tiu Laurel," De Mesa said.

De Mesa admitted that there is now about 15 to 20 percent post-harvest losses especially during the drying and milling process due to the variety of rice being planted and harvested.

"Ang percentage is about 15 to 20 percent depende kung

saang area at saang level. Ang karamihan niyan ay doon sa drying at saka sa milling. Iyong halimbawa sa milling natin, sa kiskisan – malaki na sa atin iyong 65% na milling recovery pero marami pa rin sa kiskisan nasa 50 to 55 percent ang milling recovery," De Mesa said.

"Ang isang dahilan nito,

maraming variety ng bigas na mayroon ngayon na natatanim at mayroong masyadong mahaba, mayroong bilugan, masyadong maliit. So iyong kiskisan kasi ano 'yan eh, 'pag rubber hull, 'pag hindi maganda iyong clearance... talagang maraming durog o kaya marami iyong palay pa o ipa na natitira so kailangan ikiskis uli so maraming nasasayang," he added.

"So, ang focus ngayon again ni Secretary Tiu Laurel ay ma-ensure na hindi tataas sa tatlo kada rehiyon iyong variety ng palay na maitanim. Ang bet namin isa/dalawa lang eh kaya very efficient iyong kanilang milling system and eventually iyong kanilang milling recovery napakataas," De Mesa said.

PCO

# PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

Date: APR. 06 2024 Page: A5



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## **DA sees no redux of rice price caps**

The Department of Agriculture (DA) will not recommend price ceilings or suggested retail prices for rice even if the grain's prices are affected by a higher inflation rate. Arnel de Mesa, assistant secretary and spokesperson for the DA, said on Saturday that price caps have been proven to have adverse effects on the industry. He made the remarks days after the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said there will be a faster increase in the prices of rice until July this year. The PSA said rice inflation went up to 24.4 percent in March, up from the 23.7 percent recorded in February—and that rice inflation is expected to slow down by August this year. In September 2023, President Marcos issued Executive Order No. 39, which imposed a monthlong price cap of P41 per kilo of regular-milled rice and P45 per kilo of well-milled rice. De Mesa pointed out that despite the higher, year-on-year rice inflation prices of rice are actually declining each month. He said rice prices dropped to P49 to P50 per kilo this month, from P52 per kilo last month.

—JULIE M. AURELIO



## COA: Mountain Province LGU awarded projects to banned firm

The Commission on Audit (COA) has flagged the provincial government of Mountain Province for awarding two irrigation projects to a blacklisted construction firm.

In its 2023 annual audit report, the COA said that while the provincial government was able to rebid and award the projects to a new contractor, the incident could have been avoided.

"The failure to conduct a thorough post-qualification check during procurement activities resulted in the award of two projects with total contract cost of P8.315 million for the implementation of small-scale irrigation projects received

from the Department of Agriculture (DA) to a blacklisted construction firm," the audit report read.

COA records show that the provincial government received P10.157 million from the DA for the implementation of the irrigation projects.

Two of the projects worth P4.950 million and P3.366 million involved the construction of the Mayasen diversion dam and Surnangan irrigation canal, respectively.

Contracts for both projects, which were awarded to ADL General Construction, were rebid and awarded to a new contractor, Tawid Builders Corp., in August 2023.

Inquiry by the audit team bared that the provincial government's bids and awards committee (BAC) belatedly learned that ADL was among the blacklisted contractors.

The firm was blacklisted over its previous failure to comply with contractual obligations and written lawful instruction of the procuring entity, poor performance or unsatisfactory quality and progress of work as well as failure to meet the approved specifications for quality of materials and workmanship.

The provincial BAC said it learned that ADL was blacklisted only when the Government Procurement Policy Board system did

not accept its name for another contract.

The COA reminded the provincial government to be more diligent in reviewing the qualification of bidders.

It said similar incidents "may result in a possible non-performance of the contractor's obligation as contained in the contract agreement to the disadvantage of the provincial government."

The COA said the provincial BAC has committed to regularly check the consolidated blacklisting report before issuing any notice of award of contracts to avoid a similar incident.

— Elizabeth Marcelo



# Negros town to be placed under state of calamity

By **GILBERT BAYORAN**

**BACOLOD CITY** – The municipal disaster risk reduction and management council (MDRRMC) has recommended the declaration of a state of calamity in San Enrique, Negros Occidental due to El Niño.

The Sangguniang Bayan is expected to approve the recommendation of the MDRRMC during its regular session on Monday, according to San Enrique Mayor Jilson Tubillara.

He said damage to agriculture in the town has reached P10 million, with 6,000 households affected.

Tubillara said rice fields and sugarcane plantations in 10 barangays were affected.

Fishponds were drying up, he added.

Tubillara said water rationing has likewise started in Barangay Tibsok.

He said the MDRRMC is urging the Department of Agriculture to conduct cloud seeding operations to induce rain.

Local government units (LGUs) under a state of calamity can tap their calamity funds to assist affected residents and implement measures to mitigate the impact of El Niño.

A state of calamity had earlier been declared in 18 LGUs due to the El Niño phenomenon.

These include 11 towns in Occidental Mindoro and two in Oriental Mindoro.

San Vicente in Palawan; San Andres, Romblon; Mayoyao, Ifugao; Sinaloa, Antique, and Zambo-

anga City have also been placed under a state of calamity.

In Cebu City, 28 mountain barangays were placed under a state of calamity after the city government declared a water crisis due to the impact of the dry spell.

The Task Force El Niño said certain criteria should be met before an area can be placed under a state of calamity.

The Department of Agriculture said damage due to El Niño has reached P2.63 billion nationwide.

The government has so far provided financial assistance, food packs and equipment worth P1.1 billion to affected farmers and residents.

More areas are expected to be affected by El Niño this month, officials said.

## EDITORIAL

### Rice sufficiency

Once again, rice prices accounted for a substantial percentage of the food-fueled increase in the inflation rate last month. From 3.4 percent in February, the inflation rate accelerated to 3.7 percent, driven by food and non-alcoholic beverages, whose prices rose to 5.6 percent in March from 4.6 the previous month.

Food inflation climbed to 5.7 percent from the 4.8 percent in February – the highest since the 5.8 percent recorded in November last year. Rice inflation rose to 24.4 percent from 23.7 – the fastest since the 24.6 percent in February 2009. Rice prices rose across all classifications year-on-year and month-on-month, according to National Statistician Dennis Mapa. While rice prices may soften by August, its inflation rate is likely to remain double-digit, Mapa said last Friday.

The latest inflation figures were announced as Pulse Asia released the results of its latest survey on Filipinos' concerns. As in previous polls, inflation topped the list. Food inflation is a sensitive issue particularly for President Marcos, who served for over a year as concurrent secretary of agriculture, and who rose to power on a campaign platform of bringing rice prices down to P20 per kilo. To this day, not even the heavily subsidized Kadiwa outlets can afford to sell rice at P20 a kilo.

The government may want to seriously consider an idea

that emerged at the recent food summit in Nueva Ecija. Officials of the Philippine Rice Research Institute said the country could become 95 percent rice-sufficient by 2028 through the use of hybrid and inbred varieties. The **PhilRice** projection is slightly lower than the President's hoped-for 97.5 percent rice sufficiency by the end of his term, and less optimistic than the projection of the National Irrigation Authority.

NIA Administrator Eduardo Guillen had said last February that rice sufficiency is possible by 2028 through the expansion of irrigation facilities including the construction of more dams. Farmers' group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura executive director Jayson Cainglet doubted this, noting similar promises made by previous NIA administrations.

It will be up to the Marcos administration to show that it matches words with action. Perhaps the P20-a-kilo rice "aspiration" is now a pipe dream, but the administration has four years to attain rice sufficiency by 2028. The PhilRice suggestion is also worth pursuing. One of the most successful rice producers in the country, who is exporting premium rice, has been touting hybrid varieties for a long time. With sufficient government support, rice sufficiency need not be an impossible dream.



## **ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

### **BFAR: No fish kill in Pangasinan**

No fish kill has been monitored in parts of western Pangasinan, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources clarified yesterday.

"Latest monitoring results of BFAR in aquaculture areas in Ilocos region did not show any indication or likelihood of the occurrence of fish kill," the BFAR regional field office said in a statement.

Ronald Eugenio, an aquaculture operator quoted in a news report as confirming the fish kill, has clarified his statement.

Eugenio said he only talked about the effects of El Niño to fishpond operators when he was interviewed by a local radio station.

"We ask members of the media to be responsible and circumspect in their reports as these can impact the fish production industry which is very important to the country's food security," the BFAR regional office said.

– Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas





## Agri exec binutata price cap sa bigas

Kontra ang Department of Agriculture (DA) sa pagpapatupad ng price cap o suggested retail price (SRP) sa bigas kahit patuloy ang pagtaas ng presyo nito sa mga pamilihan.

“Wala kaming plano na magkaroon ng price cap or SRP kasi may mabigat ding epekto yan pagdating ng panahon,” pahayag ni DA Assistant Secretary at Spokesperson Arnel de Mesa sa isang news forum sa Quezon City nitong Sabado, Abril 6.

Kabilang ang mataas na presyo ng bigas sa bansa sa mga sinasabing dahilan ng pagsipa ng food inflation.

Base sa ulat ng Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), umakyat ang inflation rate sa 3.7% nitong Marso mula sa 3.4% noong Pebrero dahil sa pagtaas ng presyo ng mga pagkain tulad ng bigas at karne.

Ang inflation ay ang bilis ng pagtaas ng presyo ng mga bilhin tulad ng pagkain, petrolyo at mga serbisyo.

Ayon sa PSA, umakyat ang food inflation sa 5.6% nitong Marso mula sa 4.6% noong Pebrero.

Aniya, nasa 24.4% ang inflation ng bigas nitong Marso at malapit na ito sa all time high na 24.6% na naitala noong Pebrero 2009 na 24.6%.

Sa kabila nito, sinabi ni De Mesa na bumababa naman kada buwan ang retail price ng bigas.

“Yong presyo ng bigas bumababa from P52 per kilo last month. Ngayon, nasa P50 to P49 per kilo,” ani De Mesa.

Kinumpirma naman niya ang pagtaya ng PSA na magpapatuloy ang rice inflation hanggang sa Hulyo ngunit magiging normal aniya ito sa Agosto.  
**(Dolly Cabreza)**



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Fish kill sa Pangasinan pinabulaanan

PINABULAAN at klinaro noong Biyernes (April 5) ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) na walang nangyaring fishkill sa Western Pangasinan.

"Latest monitoring results of BFAR in aquaculture areas in Ilocos region did not show any indication or likelihood of the occurrence of fish kill," ayon sa pahayag ng BFAR regional field office.

Pinabulaanan din ni aquatic operator Ronald Eugenio na may sinabi siyang may napaulat na fish kill sa nasabing lugar.

Ayon kay Eugenio, siya ay na-interview lamang ng local radio station sa Pangasinan at ang tangi nilang pinag-usapan ay ang epekto ng El Niño sa mga fish grower.

"We ask members of the media to be responsible and circumspect in their reports as these can impact the fish production industry which is very important to the country's food security," ayon sa BFAR regional office. (Allan Bergonia)

Date: APR 06, 2024 Page: 2



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

### SRP sa bigas 'di irerekomenda ng DA

Walang plano ang Department of Agriculture (DA) na irekomenda na maipatupad ang paglalagay ng suggested retail prices (SRPs) sa bigas kahit na may bahagyang pagtaas ang inflation.

Ito ayon kay Agriculture spokesperson Amel de Mesa ay dahil may matinding epekto ang paglalagay ng SRP sa bigas pagdating ng panahon.

Noong nagdaang taon, nagpalabas ng Executive order 39 si Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. para sa mandated na SRP na P41 kada kilo ng regular-milled rice at P45 kada kilo ng well-milled rice pero itinigil din ang pagpapatupad sa naturang kautusan dahil nagpatuloy naman ang pagtaas ng presyo ng bigas hanggang ngayong taon.

Una rito, sinabi ng Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) na tataas ang inflation sa bigas hanggang Hulyo pero manormalisa pagsapit ng Agosto.

Gayunman, sinabi ni De Mesa na gumagawa ng paraan ang ahensiya upang mapababa ang cost of rice production tulad ng ginagawa ng mga karatig bansa ng Pilipinas tuloy magiging daan ito na mapababa naman ng halaga ng bigas sa pamilihan. (Angie dela Cruz)



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## World food prices rise in March: FAO

**PARIS:** Global food prices rose in March, the first increase since July, pulled higher by cooking oil prices despite the cost of grains continuing to ease, the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization said on Friday.

The FAO's overall Food Price Index climbed 1.1 percent over the month to stand at 118.3 points in March 2024. On an annual comparison, it was 7.7 percent lower.

The sub-index for vegetable oils jumped by 8.0 percent over the month to reach a one-year high. The FAO said prices for palm, soy, sunflower and rapeseed oils all climbed higher.

Rising palm oil prices were driven by seasonal drops in output in leading producing nations that coincided with strong demand

in Southeast Asia, while demand from the biofuel sector pulled up soy oil prices. Dairy prices rose by 2.9 percent in March on a monthly basis, while meat prices climbed 1.7 percent.

Meanwhile, cereal prices slid 2.6 percent on a monthly basis, while sugar prices fell 5.4 percent.

Food prices reached a record high after Russia invaded agricultural power Ukraine in February 2022 but have dropped since then.

Last month's uptick comes as inflation has slowed dramatically in many countries but a recent rebound in global oil prices has sparked concern that it may persist at a level that could discourage central banks from cutting interest rates.

AFP



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE



**STABLE MARKET SITUATION** – A stall owner brandishes abundant inventory of vegetables on Saturday, April 6, 2024. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), food prices surged in March 2024, reaching 5.7 percent, up from February 2024's 4.8 percent, which marks the highest recorded food inflation since November 2023, which stood at 5.8 percent. (Arnold Quizol)



# El Niño, a threat to fisheries, marine biodiversity

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

**R**ECOGNIZING the impact of extreme weather events on the country's food production capacities, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered Cabinet officials to assist farmers hit by the environmental phenomena, El Niño and La Niña.



EL NIÑO can lead to coral bleaching. DANNY OCAMPO



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

The two are extreme opposites. While La Niña triggers above-normal rainfall, El Niño causes severe drought and heat waves.

Currently, the El Niño dry spell or the long period of drought is gripping the Philippines. While the effect of this phenomenon is more pronounced and measured in terms of its impact on crop production, its impact on fisheries is often overlooked.

### Impact on fisheries

EXPERTS said the impact of El Niño on fisheries is primarily due to changes in ocean temperature, current and the availability of nutrients.

It has a significant impact on fisheries, affecting the livelihoods of millions of people worldwide.

Its effect is strongly felt in the Philippines, primarily through changes in sea surface temperature, salinity, nutrient availability and precipitation rate.

The change in ocean-atmospheric interactions impacts marine life, including the species that comprise the country's fisheries resources.

Many communities in the Philippines depend on fisheries for livelihood. Its impacts depend on the intensity and duration of El Niño.

### Socioeconomic implications

THE socioeconomic implications of El Niño on communities dependent on fisheries in the Philippines are significant and multifaceted.

For instance, the El Niño event of 1990-1992 caused damage estimated at P4.1 billion.

The decline in fish populations and subsequent decrease in income can lead to economic instability in affected communities. As food production decreases significantly, food security can also be compromised, with fish being a primary source of protein for many Filipinos.

The fisheries sector, which is a significant contributor to the

national economy, can face severe challenges.

### Impact on aquaculture, inland fisheries

EL NIÑO can have significant impacts on both aquaculture and inland fisheries production, as well.

It can impact aquaculture output, particularly for marine plants, mollusks, and crustaceans.

The changes in sea surface temperature and salinity can disrupt the growth and reproduction of mussels and oysters, leading to decreased production.

Changes in water quality, such as decreased dissolved oxygen levels, can further affect aquaculture operations.

For inland fisheries, El Niño can trigger shifts toward more drought-resistant species. Those who are caught flat-footed by the change in extreme temperatures suffer the consequence of losing their hard-earned money invested in fishpond operations.

Scientists also said changes in precipitation patterns and water availability can alter the habitat conditions of fish in lakes, rivers and reservoirs.

This can lead to changes in fish populations, with some species becoming more dominant while others decline.

### Drying fishponds

TO date, fishpond operators are starting to feel the brunt of El Niño. Fishpond operators in Cavite province, for instance, are experiencing huge investment losses owing to drying fishponds.

Fernando Hicap, national chairman of fishers' group Pamalakaya, said El Niño is severely impacting on aquaculture as well as inland fisheries, citing the case in Cavite.

Fishponds in Cavite that are adjacent to Manila Bay have dried up and turned into parched earth, Hicap told the BusinessMirror via Messenger on April 2.

"The fishpond used to provide alternative sources of food and livelihood for many fisherfolk

and residents of Tanza, Cavite," said Hicap, a former Anakpawis Partylist Representative and a fisherman in Cavite.

According to Hicap, the fishpond has been unproductive since January due to the rapid loss of water volume.

Pamalakaya has been calling on the national government to comprehensively address the impacts of El Niño in the rural sector.

"The rural sector is suffering from drought for many months now. And yet we haven't seen any substantial action from the government, given the extent of damage of El Niño to the agriculture sector. Fishers and farmers must collectively assert concrete support in the form of production subsidies, economic aid and relief, and long-term rehabilitation measures," Hicap said.

### Varying impacts

JIMELY FLORES, a fisheries and marine scientist, said the effect of El Niño on fisheries varies on the location. But generally, she said the long season of drought has a net negative impact on fisheries, as well as other marine species.

"Coastal habitats and organisms may suffer from extreme heat beyond their normal range which may result in, worst, their death," she said.

In moderate cases, Flores said the effect is the shifts in habitat-seeking areas, where the condition is ambient to them, or shifts in reproductive processes.

"Corals are known to bleach during intense high temperatures. Bleaching or fish kills may happen because of pools of deoxygenated water," said Flores, a conservation advocate.

She added that "water current may shift resulting in some areas to temporary upwell, bringing nutrient-rich and cooler waters from the deep, or it may cause pools of deoxygenated water."

According to Flores, fisheries



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

production in general decreases particularly for the highly valued migratory large pelagic fishes, or the fishes in the open, free waters away from the shore.

"The small pelagics may go deeper to seek cooler waters. Though in areas where upwelling happens, temporary increase of observed aggregation may occur," she said, citing the positive effect in some cases.

She explained that Zamboanga sardines gained from El Niño in the past due to stronger winds from the lands causing temporary upwelling in known sardine areas. This resulted in bigger aggregation, thus, "higher catch and increased production."

However, this does not mean an increase in the size of stocks.

"It might intensify fishing. It is a two-edged sword and [it is sad] that many never looked at the other side of the blade," she said.

Flores said while corals bleach or turn white leading to their destruction, El Niño also affects mangroves and seagrasses that become prone to diseases.

"Heat also increases degradation of macro plastics, turning them into nano and micro, and more pollutants leach into the water," she added.

In lakes, rivers and aquaculture, El Niño favors invasive species that were introduced from hotter areas like catfish and tilapia, she said.

## Varying temperature thresholds

EXECUTIVE Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim, of Asean Centre of Biodiversity, said different marine organisms have varying temperature threshold.

"Warming seas, such as what happens during the El Niño phenomenon, will result in the loss of several species, once their marine habitat reaches their respective heat thresholds," Lim, a biodiversity expert told the BUSINESSMIRROR via Messenger on April 4.

She said certain types of fish



WHAT used to be a fishpond in Tanza, Cavite, is all cracked and dry land as a result of El Niño extreme dry spell. PAMALAKAYA

like the skipjack and bigeye tuna, for example, have preferences for specific water temperatures. Thus, abrupt temperature changes can lead to increased fish mortalities, and reduce fish catch.

"Other occurrences during El Niño, such as coral bleaching, dangerous algal blooms, reduced nutrients, and changes in water salinity, can also affect fisheries diversity," Lim said.

## Resilience of healthy biodiversity

ALTHOUGH this climactic pattern may have devastating effects on marine fisheries, a healthy marine biodiversity can help our fisheries recover from and be more resilient to El Niño effects, Lim, a licensed veterinarian added.

"Other threats, such as marine pollution and unsustainable fishing, also need to be addressed, as these will be aggravating the impacts of the El Niño phenomenon every time it happens," she said.

But fish is not the only marine life affected by El Niño., citing the case of marine turtles.

"The sex ratio of certain charismatic marine species, in particular, marine turtles, will be affected by warmer beach temperatures,"

she said.

Marine turtles lay eggs in the sand, so if the temperature of the sand no longer goes lower than around 28 degrees Celsius, most of the hatchlings will be females and there will be no more male turtles in the future, Lim explained.

In addition, Lim, a former DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau director who started her career as a protector of marine turtles, pointed out that sea level rise can also inundate beach areas that later there may be no sandy areas left for female marine turtles to lay eggs on, thereby threatening the existence of these amazing long-distance, pre-historic creatures of the sea.

"Climate change is already upon us and undoubtedly, there are mitigating measures that must be undertaken, especially by developed countries to help reduce the frequency and duration of ENSO [El Niño-Southern Oscillation] events. But for an archipelagic, developing but a marine biodiversity-rich country like the Philippines, our solutions may very well lie on how the country, together with our neighbors in the Asean, protect nature and the variety of biological resources we are endowed with," Lim said.





## Global food prices up after 7-month downward trend

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) food price index rose 1.3 points, or 1.1%, to 118.3 points in March compared to February, increasing for the first time after a seven-month of downward trend.

According to the FAO's press release on Friday, the increase in food prices was driven mainly by vegetable oils,

dairy products, and meat.

Meanwhile, the index posted an annual decline of 9.9 points, or 7.7%, in March, despite the monthly overall rise.

The cereal price index fell 2.6% to 110.8 points from February and 20% from March 2023.

The index for vegetable oil rose 8% to 130.6 points in March month-on-month.

In its sixth consecutive monthly increase, the dairy price index increased 2.9% to 124.2 points in March from February.

The Meat price index was up by 1.7% to 113 points, its second consecutive monthly increase.

The Sugar price index went down 5.4% to 133.1 points from February to March but rose 4.8% from March 2023. AA



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## PH mango shipment to Australia resumes

THE Department of Trade and Industry yesterday said Fastboxph would dispatch another batch of Philippine mangoes to Australia this month.

The move further highlights the trade relations between the two nations, according to Trade Secretary Frederico Pascual.

Pascual said the trade levels between the two nations have soared beyond pre-pandemic figures.

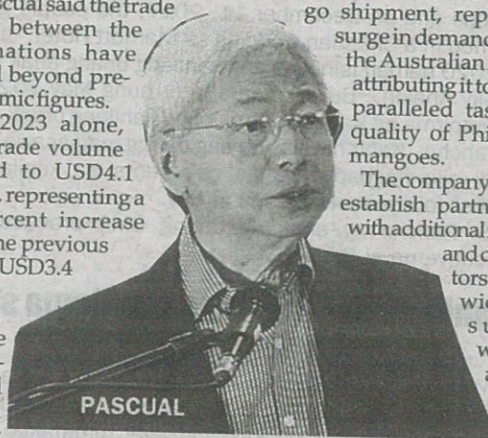
In 2023 alone, their trade volume surged to USD4.1 billion, representing a 20 percent increase from the previous year's USD3.4 billion.

"The continued growth in our bilateral trade underscores the vast potential for our products

in the Australian market. The successful export of our mangoes exemplifies the significant strides we're making in facilitating agricultural trade, which is pivotal for our economic agenda," Pascual said.

FastboxPH, the logistics firm entrusted with the recent mango shipment, reported a surge in demand within the Australian market, attributing it to the unparalleled taste and quality of Philippine mangoes.

The company aims to establish partnerships with additional retailers and distributors nationwide, ensuring wider accessibility of Philippine mangoes to Australian consumers.



PASCUAL



# TAMING INFLATION

## Gov't strengthens measures to tame upward price pressures

**THE government will strengthen measures to tame upward price pressures amid the El Niño and La Niña challenges, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) said.**

NEDA issued the statement after the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported on Friday that headline inflation increased to 3.7 percent in March from 3.4 percent in February.

The headline inflation during the month, however, was still significantly lower than the 7.6 percent recorded in March last year.

For the first three months of the year, headline inflation settled at 3.3 percent, still within the government's 2 to 4 percent target.

Core inflation, which excludes selected food and energy items, slowed down to 3.4 percent in March 2024 from 3.6 percent in the previous month.

In March 2023, core inflation was higher at 8.0 percent.

In a briefing, National Statistician Dennis Mapa said the uptrend in the headline inflation in March was primarily due to the higher year-on-year increase in the heavily-weighted food and non-alcoholic beverages at 5.6 percent from 4.6 percent in February 2024.

Mapa said food inflation rate in particular picked up to 5.7 percent from 4.8 percent in February 2024.

The increase was influenced by rice inflation, which accelerated to 24.4 percent from 23.7 percent, and meat inflation which went up to 2.0 percent from 0.7 percent.

The food inflation rate was tempered, however, by the slower price increases of eggs and other dairy products (2.3 percent from 3.5 percent), fruits (7.9 percent from 8.7 percent), bread and other cereals (4.6 percent from 5.1 percent), and ready-made food products (4.3 percent from 4.6 percent).

On the other hand, deflation was recorded for fish (-0.9 percent from 0.7 percent), vegetables (-2.5 percent from -11.0 percent), and sugar (-2.9 percent from -2.4 percent).

Non-food inflation, meanwhile, remained stable at 2.4 percent during the month.

The upward trend in the March 2024 inflation rate for transportation, restaurants and accommodation, health, and recreation was also offset by the slower inflation in housing and utilities.

In a separate statement, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said the March 2024 inflation is within the BSP's forecast range of 3.4 to 4.2 percent.

"The inflation outturn is consistent with the BSP expectations that inflation will likely remain within the target range in Q1 (first quarter) 2024 due largely to negative base effects," the BSP said.

"However, inflation could temporarily accelerate above the target range in the next two quarters of the year due to the possible adverse impact of adverse weather conditions to domestic agricultural output and positive base effects," it added.

The BSP said risks to the inflation outlook remained tilted toward the upside.

It noted that upside risks to the inflation outlook could emanate from higher transport charges, higher prices of food commodities facing supply constraints, increased electricity rates, higher global oil prices, and implementation of a legislated increase in the minimum wage.

The BSP, however, assured that the Monetary Board will consider the latest inflation outturn in its upcoming monetary policy meeting April 8 and will continue to support the government's non-monetary measures to address supply-side pressures on prices and sustain the disinflation process.

NEDA Secretary Arsenio Balisacan, for his part, said the government is closely monitoring weather conditions and their effects on the supply of key commodities, such as food and energy, to protect Filipino households from sudden price increases.

"To ensure sufficient water supply and support our farmers during the dry season, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has been tasked with monitoring water supply in the country," Balisacan said. "Simultaneously, the Department of Agriculture is proactively extending assistance to farmers adversely affected by the drought."

Balisacan said preparations for La Niña are already starting.

These measures aim to ensure food and energy security, availability of

clean water supply, and public health and safety.

To ease the burden of high electricity prices on vulnerable Filipinos, eligible consumers can receive a 100-percent discount on their monthly bills through the government's Lifeline Rate program.

As of January 2024, 4.9 percent of the 4.6 million beneficiaries of the conditional cash transfer initiative Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program have registered.

"While we continue to face multiple risks, such as potential adjustments in transportation fares, wages, and service utility fees, the Marcos administration is committed to managing the country's inflation," Balisacan said. "This will be key to sustaining our growth momentum and providing a better life for our countrymen."

Meanwhile, Speaker Martin Romualdez said in a statement that the Philippines remains on track to achieve its economic growth target this year, despite the Development Budget Coordination Committee revising the 2024 goal to 6 to 7 percent, down from the previous 6.5 to 7.5 percent.

He said the administration has put in place key economic policies to sustain robust economic growth and enable the country to meet the low end of its gross domestic product target for 2024.

"The economic policies and measures the President and Congress have taken and pursued are keeping us on the right track," he said.

PNA