

CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY APRIL 12, 2024

MANILA BULLETIN

Let's celebrate Filipino Food Month

BY YVETTE TAN

Apr 12, 2024 00:04 AM

AVANT GARDENER



April is Filipino Food Month. Created under Presidential Proclamation 469 in 2018, the event celebrates the vibrancy (and deliciousness) of Filipino culinary heritage and foodways. According to the Department of Tourism (DOT) website, it also encourages Filipinos to “promote, preserve, and embrace our culinary traditions.”

Because we grew up with our food traditions, it's easy for us to think of them as lackluster and commonplace. Many Filipinos would rather eat and learn about foreign cuisines and foodways because they seem exotic and exciting, particularly if they're widely represented in media. We tend to forget that our own cuisine is just as important, and just as worthy of attention.

Filipino Food Month doesn't just remind us to pay attention to our local dishes. It also reminds us that agriculture is an important part of our foodways. Sadly, this is something not a lot of people understand.

More than our usual food crops and livestock, the country is rich in edible indigenous plants and animals, important ingredients in food cultures that, due to various reasons such as loss of environment or market demand, are slowly disappearing, or have disappeared altogether.

Foodstuffs that were once common in the market or in backyards have become rare or have disappeared altogether, especially in cities. For example, in the 80s, chico used to be sold in Manila when in season. Not anymore. And even then, something like mabolo, Rizal's favorite fruit, was already hard to find. I only got to taste one just before the pandemic, and it was on a Rizal tour in Laguna.

On the other hand, demand has made something like batuan, which used to be found only in the Visayas, a common sight in specialty food in Manila, albeit in powder form (I can only speak about Manila because this is where I am based. I am sure it is different elsewhere).

There are movements to preserve our heirloom ingredients and foodways. For example, you can look up the Slow Food Movement's Ark of Taste, a compendium of endangered ingredients and foodways around the world and see what's been recorded under the Philippines.

If you have a hometown, you can ask around to see what local food crops or livestock are used in dishes that can only be found in your area. You can also find out what ingredients were used plentifully in dishes but are now hard to grow or forage.

When many people think, "Filipino food culture," they tend to think of Manila as the trendsetter, when this shouldn't be the case at all. The Philippines is incredibly biodiverse, which means a vibrant hyperlocal food scene for every town, city, district, or province, given the right circumstances. Every local ingredient, every local dish should be celebrated for what it is: the result of the harvest of the land and the culture that thrives on it. We should be celebrating our local and hyperlocal dishes and putting them on our social media instead of following what millions of others are already putting on their feed.

April may be Filipino Food Month, but it doesn't mean that we should only promote and celebrate Filipino food during this time. Let's hope that people use Filipino Food Month as a jump-off point to a lifetime of savoring our local foodways, one barrio at a time.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/12/let-s-celebrate-filipino-food-month>

Private firms seek task force's guidance to aid El Niño-devastated farmers BY JEL SANTOS

Apr 11, 2024 07:25 PM



As Filipino farmers continue to endure the wrath of El Niño, several companies have come forward to seek the guidance of the Task Force El Niño on how they can help provide assistance to the agriculture sector.

Based on the most recent data from the Department of Agriculture (DA), the agricultural damage caused by El Niño has ballooned to P2.63 billion, affecting a total of 54,203 farmers.

“Two weeks ago, mayroong lumapit sa akin na group of companies, actually isa sa mga businesses ng private company na iyon ay nasa media, so mayroon silang initiative iyong corporate social responsibility. Nagtatanong sila kung paano pwedeng mag-organize ‘yung individual foundations nila sa bawat kumpanya. Gusto nilang makipag-ugnayan sa atin kung paano matutulungan ang mga magsasaka (Two weeks ago, a group of companies approached me, actually one of the businesses of that private company is in the media, so they have an initiative on corporate social responsibility. They asked how their individual foundations can organize in each company. They want to coordinate with us on how to help the farmers),” Presidential Communications Office (PCO) Assistant Secretary Joey Villarama, the spokesperson of Task Force El Niño, said during a radio interview on Thursday, April 11.

The assistance from the private sector is important to help farmers cope with the effects of El Niño.

Meanwhile, Villarama said the government has so far provided P1.1 billion in aid to farmers affected by the dry spell.

“Iyong tulong na naibigay sa mga apektado, hindi lang farm inputs, tulong sa irigasyon, kundi tulad nung pagkain sa araw-araw ng mga apektadong pamilya (The aid that has been given to those affected, it’s not just farm inputs, help with irrigation, but also the daily food of the affected families),” he added.

He noted that President Marcos’ directive to the Task Force El Niño was to help the affected farmers and their families.

‘Rice prices may not go down’

Agriculture Secretary Francisco “Kiko” Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier said that the prices of rice in the country may not go down despite the harvest season and price downswing in the global market.

He said such was because of the agricultural damage caused by the El Niño phenomenon. [SEP]

Per Laurel, the world rice prices are currently going down but due to the “lingering effects” of the phenomenon, it is unlikely for rice prices to decrease in the Philippines.

He noted that the Philippines is now at the peak of the El Niño phenomenon so we could expect to monitor more agricultural damage.

[SEP]“To be honest, pataas pa, we are at the height of the El Niño now. Hopefully, by end of May, patapos na 'yan, pababa na (To be honest, [the agricultural damage] is still increasing, we are at the height of El Nino now),” he explained.

18 LGUs under state of calamity

On April 5, Villarama said a total of 18 local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines had already declared a state of calamity due to the worsening effects of El Niño.

These are: 11 municipalities in Occidental Mindoro; Bulalacao and Mansalay towns in Oriental Mindoro; San Vicente, Palawan; San Andres, Romblon; Mayoyao, Ifugao; Sibalom, Antique; and Zamboanga City.

According to Villarama, most of the LGUs that declared a state of calamity are from Luzon, as the island is where most of the areas with drought conditions are located based on the observation of the task force.

The number might further increase as four municipalities in Iloilo are also mulling to declare a state of calamity, but he noted that they should meet the criteria to do so, he added.

For an area to be declared under a state of calamity, the task force spokesperson said it must meet the criteria including: 15 percent of the population shall be affected, 30 percent of livelihoods shall be impacted, and there shall be damage to structures or vital installations.

10 regions devastated

Of the 16 regions in the country, DA spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said 10 have suffered the effects of El Niño.

The affected regions are Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Region 1, Region 2, Region 3, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon), Mimaropa (Mindoro Occidental, Mindoro Oriental, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan), Region 5, Region 6, Region 9, and Region 12.

Mimaropa is the region that has incurred the highest damage to agriculture at P770 million; followed by Region VI at P739 million, he noted.

The DA spokesperson said the damage to rice fields was pegged at P1.7 billion; followed by corn with recorded damage of P591 million. Damage to livestock, on the other hand, was estimated at P59.6 million.

34,264 hectares

A total of 34,264 hectares (ha) of rice fields have been destroyed by the dry spell, according to the monitoring of the DA.

De Mesa stated that only about 10,000 ha were totally damaged by the drought, representing one percent of the total area planted with rice which is one million ha.

Meanwhile, he noted that 25,000 ha of rice fields were partially damaged but these can still recover.

El Niño is still expected to intensify, as forecasted by the state weather bureau, and it is forecasted to reach its peak this April, De Mesa said.

The phenomenon is expected to subside gradually by May, he added.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/11/private-firms-seek-task-force-s-guidance-to-aid-el-nino-devastated-farmers>

DA, NFA raise palay buying price to boost farmer competitiveness

BY GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG

Apr 11, 2024 05:02 PM

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Food Authority (NFA) recently announced price adjustment for palay to boost farmer competitiveness.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel de Mesa said on Thursday, April 11, that the new buying price will range from P23 to P30 per kilo, while the fresh palay will be around P17 to P23 per kilo.

“Before, clean and dry [palays were valued] at P19 and P23, [respectively],” he added. The last price change was set in September 2023.

De Mesa assured that this modification would still purchase an ample supply of palay for buffer stock.

Furthermore, the reason for increasing the buying prices for palay is because of the prevailing farmgate prices, which were said to weigh around P25 to P26.9.

“If the NFA’s buying price is P23, they can only buy a minimal amount... That’s why we’re bumping the price a little so that the NFA can keep up with the trader’s offers.”

Both the DA and NFA have shared their recent plans to visit Mindoro to check how many palay stocks they can purchase, as De Mesa states, “They have a [competitive] harvest. So the palay purchasing can be aggressive.”

“Generally we purchase [palay] in warehouses,” said NFA officer-in-charge administrator Larry Lacson regarding the procurement process. “In fact, I was able to speak with other DA officials in my last budget meeting in Bicol.”

Lacson describes the price adjustment as aggressive buying or ammunition in competitive purchasing.

Despite the competitive outlook for palay purchasing, De Mesa reiterated that the P23 to P30 price won’t be offered immediately.

“We still have the Palay Assistance to Legislators and Local Government Units [PALLGU],” he said. “LGU’s with PALLGU will procure additional funding.”

The PALLGU program allows the NFA to buy palay stocks directly from accredited farmer organizations.

Meanwhile, the NFA shared that they’re getting support from the DA in terms of visiting rice farmers in remote areas. This action ensures both agencies that are able to reach out to farmers regarding purchasing adjustments.

Lacson also hoped to modernize farm mechanizations, as he said that the previous administration was challenged with low drying capacity.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/11/da-nfa-raise-palay-buying-price-to-boost-farmer-competitiveness-1>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA launches Philippine's first mobile plant food safety lab [Romina Cabrera](#) –

April 12, 2024 | 12:00am



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. on November 6, 2023. STAR / Jesse Bustos

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) yesterday unveiled the country's first mobile plant food safety laboratory to help ensure clean and safe food for Filipinos.

The P20-million mobile lab can be used to accommodate rapid screening and testing for pesticide residue, heavy metals and microbiological contaminants.

The Bureau of Plant Industry said the modular setup can test 20 to 30 samples per day at an affordable cost.

The lab can also be upgraded or interchanged to accommodate priority hazards in plant foods, allowing flexibility and mobility to tailor responses needed for food safety, according to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel.

“This laboratory-on-wheels brings the tools of food safety directly to our agricultural communities, enabling proactive monitoring and immediate intervention. Its mobility ensures flexibility and accessibility, allowing us to reach even the most remote areas and respond promptly to emerging crises,” he said in a statement.

Laurel said that the DA is open to adopting new technologies to ensure food safety in the country.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/04/12/2347054/da-launches-philippines-first-mobile-plant-food-safety-lab>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

NFA OKs more competitive P30/k palay buying price

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

April 12, 2024 | 12:00am



The NFA council, the highest policy-making body of the grains agency, approved yesterday the NFA's higher buying price for palay in a bid to boost the government's rice buffer stock. STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — State-run National Food Authority (NFA) is optimistic that it can now compete better with private traders in buying local palay after it was allowed to purchase palay or unmilled rice by as much as P30 per kilogram.

The NFA council, the highest policy-making body of the grains agency, approved yesterday the NFA's higher buying price for palay in a bid to boost the government's rice buffer stock.

The higher buying price is aimed at allowing the NFA to purchase more palay from local farmers, thus beefing up its rice buffer stock that has been below target level.

The state-run agency has been struggling to buy palay from farmers due to its uncompetitive buying price that was below the prevailing market price offered by private traders.

"The buying price was increased so that the NFA can catch up with the price being offered by traders today," Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesperson Arnel de Mesa said in a press briefing.

The NFA will now buy dry and clean palay for P23 to P30 per kilogram, depending on the prevailing market price in a given province.

Previously, the NFA bought dry and clean palay for P19 to P23 per kilogram.

For wet and fresh palay, the NFA's buying price range will now be from P17 to P23 per kilogram from the previous P16 to P19 price level.

This is the second time that the NFA's palay buying price has been increased under the Marcos administration.

But this is the first time that the NFA will be implementing a more flexible buying price scheme, which allows it to buy palay based on the prevailing farmgate price in a province.

The NFA used to follow a fixed buying price set by the NFA council across all its buying stations nationwide, with additional price incentives being given to farmers depending on the quality of the palay sold.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., who chairs the NFA council, earlier told The STAR that it was necessary for the NFA to adopt a buying price range instead of a fixed price so that it "can play the market like a trader in buying palay."

NFA OIC-administrator Larry Lacson said the agency would fast-track the issuance of the guidelines on the new buying price so that the new price range could take effect as early as next week.

The higher buying price would allow the NFA to aggressively buy more palay from farmers, Lacson added.

"There is no uniform price nationwide unlike before. It is now on a per province basis. We will issue a price bulletin for each province," Lacson said.

The STAR reported earlier that the NFA failed to meet its palay procurement target for the second consecutive month this year in February due to its uncompetitive buying price level.

The NFA missed its full-year procurement target last year due to multiple factors. It was only able to buy 78,418 MT of palay, only 15 percent of its approved target of 495,000 MT.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/04/12/2346980/nfa-oks-more-competitive-p30k-palay-buying-price>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

The private sector's nonnegotiable role in the agri industry

By: [Ernesto M. Ordoñez](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:20 AM April 12, 2024

For our long-awaited agriculture development, budget implementation is also critical.

This coming April 17, this should be top of mind as the public-private Philippine Council of Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF) considers the Department of Agriculture's (DA) proposed budget for 2025. By government mandate, the agriculture budget cannot be submitted to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) without approval from the PCAF.

Note that over the last decade, Vietnam has allocated an average of 6 percent of its total budget for agriculture while ours only got a measly 2 percent. Thankfully, the current administration has significantly improved this. For 2024, the DA budget is up 31 percent.

Still, proper use of the budget remains a big challenge.^[SEP] It bears repeating again and again that for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021, the Commission on Audit (COA) found unliquidated or unexplained expenses amounting to one-third of the DA's total expenses.

The Alyansa Agrikultura wrote letters to the Senate blue ribbon and agriculture committees asking for an investigation into the matter, yet no response was ever given. Since matters such as these are important, complaint letters should also be sent to the Senate president and the House of Representatives Speaker for the desired action.

Process

Under the current leadership, there has been great improvement in private sector participation when it comes to budget formulation. It used to be that PCAF would be

presented a DA-prepared budget without proper assessment from the private sector, which was not given enough time to study it.

Under time pressure, the private sector had no choice but to give its approval. At one point, the private sector gave its reservation, but the official transmission of the DA and DBM made no mention of such reservation.

The good news is, there is now a complete turnaround.

Just recently, a three-day budget session that included the private sector was held in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. This was followed by three more days of discussions at the DA head office.

The results of these consultations will be given to PCAF on April 17. However, there is no plan yet to present the proposed budget monitoring system with private sector participation, which will ensure that corruption and waste will be minimized.

Last Jan. 5, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. also started a process that should be continued and strengthened. He restored a practice directing regional executive directors to present all DA-funded projects to the private sector-led regional agriculture and fisheries councils to allow proper monitoring.

Corruption

Sans private sector involvement, here is how corruption usually happens.

With agriculture funds devolved to local government units (LGUs), some would not liquidate their budgets. Whenever this happens, there is always a possibility of massive corruption and waste. Although the DA is ultimately responsible for budget use, they would often say it was not their fault that the LGUs did not liquidate their expenses.

Systematic reports should have been made so that erring LGUs would be held accountable and penalized as appropriate. Instead, the Pontius Pilate syndrome (and possible connivance) always prevailed. For the funds directly disbursed by the DA, the private sector could do nothing since they were prevented from monitoring this.

The COA would then come in and find unexplained expenses. In the end, no one is penalized. It's basically a vicious cycle that needs to stop.

It is already bad enough that the DA gets such a small percentage of the total budget compared to other countries. For one-third to be lost to corruption and waste is an absolute disaster.

What Tiu Laurel started last Jan. 5 must now be continued and strengthened during the PCAF budget meeting on April 17. This is the only way we can reduce poverty, face global competition and survive during the potentially dangerous free trade regime.

Private sector monitoring of the DA budget is a nonnegotiable imperative we must immediately implement. **INQ**

The author is Agriwatch chair, former secretary of presidential flagship programs and projects, and former undersecretary of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry.

<https://business.inquirer.net/454243/the-private-sectors-nonnegotiable-role-in-the-agri-industry>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

NFA to pay more for palay to build up buffer

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:24 AM April 12, 2024

MANILA, Philippines — The National Food Authority (NFA) has raised its buying price for palay or unhusked rice—not only to build its buffer stock but also to help boost farmers’ income by topping the offers of private traders.

The NFA Council approved an increase in the procurement price to a range of P23 to P30 per kilogram for dry and clean palay from P19 to P23 per kg announced in September last year, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said on Thursday at a press briefing.

De Mesa, also the Department of Agriculture (DA) spokesperson, said the new price range for wet and fresh palay would be P17 to P23 a kilo from P16 to P19 per kg previously.

This is “to reflect higher prices in the market amidst worries over rice supply due to drought caused by El Niño,” the DA said.

NFA OIC Administrator Larry Lacson said they were rushing to complete the rules on the revised procurement price.

“Hopefully, we can implement it by next week,” Lacson said.

Boosting buffer stock, farmers’ income

Prior to this, De Mesa said the NFA had found it challenging to source palay as traders offered a much higher price.

The prevailing farm-gate prices, the DA official said, range from P23 to P25 per kg compared with the national average of P26.90 per kg. Based on DA estimates, traders are buying dry palay from farmers for P27 to P30 per kg.

“We need to ensure that our farmers make money to encourage them to continue planting and even expand the area planted to rice,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

With the new price range, “we are confident we can purchase many produce in areas where harvesting is ongoing,” Lacson added.

Latest data from the NFA showed it had purchased 12,378 bags of palay in February, sliding by 85.6 percent from 86,216 bags in the same month a year earlier. It was just 2.28 percent of the procurement target for the month.

As February is not a harvest season, the palay stocks procured during the month were leftovers from the last cropping season.

The NFA is mandated by the Rice Tariffication Law to maintain a national rice buffer stock equivalent to at least nine days of consumption, pegged at 330,000 metric tons, which should be sourced solely from local farmers.

<https://business.inquirer.net/454232/nfa-to-pay-more-for-palay-to-build-up-buffer>

BUSINESS WORLD:

NFA approves palay buying prices topping out at P30/kg

April 11, 2024 | 8:43 pm



A farmer threshes newly harvested palay grains at a ricefield in Mogpog, Marinduque in central Philippines, March 22, 2016. — REUTERS

THE National Food Authority (NFA) Council said on Thursday that it approved buying prices for palay, or unmilled rice, that top out at P30 per kilogram (kg), depending on how the grain is graded and with price variations by location.

“What the (NFA) Council approved is a range for dry and clean palay of between P23 to P30 (per kg). For fresh, it is about P17 to P23 (per kg),” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesman Arnel V. de Mesa told reporters.

Last year, the NFA set the purchase price for dry and wet palay at P19-P23 and P16-P19 per kg, respectively.

The NFA is tasked with purchasing domestically grown rice and hold it in reserve in the event of shortages or calamities.

Traders are buying dry palay from farmers at P27 to P30 per kg.

“If the NFA’s buying price is P23 per kilo, (they) really can’t buy anything — minimal amounts at best. So, it was hiked a little so that the NFA can catch up with the price offered by traders at the moment,” he said.

Additionally, Mr. De Mesa said that rice held by NFA warehouses will now be disposed of through auction.

Stocks held for less than six months will be about 20% cheaper than the monitored prices of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), while rice kept for longer than six months will be sold at a discount of about 30% from the PSA monitored price.

NFA OIC Administrator Larry Lacson said that the agency will begin drafting guidelines on the new purchasing price, which will vary by province.

He added that the NFA is expecting to implement the new price scheme next week.

"There is no uniform price nationwide... It's on a per province basis. *'Yun ang isang bago ngayon* (that's what is new now). We will issue a price bulletin for each province," Mr. Lacson said.

Asked to comment, Raul Q. Montemayor, Federation of Free Farmers national manager, said that few farmers can comply with the NFA's quality standards due to lack of access to drying, storage and trucking facilities.

"Still, it will be a good opportunity for some farmers to sell to the NFA rather than to traders who are currently buying at between P25 to P27 per kilo," Mr. Montemayor said in a Viber message.

Bantay Bigas spokesperson Cathy L. Estavillo said that the government should increase the procurement budget of the NFA so that a "significant volume" of rice can be purchased from domestic farmers.

"At the same time, the NFA should also relaxing the requirement for the types of rice they buy. Ordinary farmers cannot meet the 100% clean and 14% dry standard due to the lack of post-harvest facilities," Ms. Estavillo said in a Viber message.

As of March 1, the national inventory of rice declined 3% to 1.37 million metric tons (MT), the PSA reported.

Stocks held by NFA facilities declined 59.9% to 41,290 MT compared with a year earlier.
— **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/11/587580/nfa-approves-palay-buying-prices-topping-out-at-p30-kg/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Rice imports hit 1.18 million MT

April 11, 2024 | 8:43 pm



PHILSTAR

THE PHILIPPINES imported 1.18 million metric tons (MT) of rice as of April 4, the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) reported.

The BPI said rice imports in April so far amounted to 23,539.92 MT.

As of the first quarter, shipments had totaled 1.15 million MT, up 43.6% from a year earlier.

The BPI reported that Vietnam remained the country's top supplier of rice as of early April, accounting for 62.4% of all imports in the year to date, or 734,583.07 MT.

In January, the Philippines and Vietnam signed an agreement giving the Philippines a quota of 1.5 million to 2 million MT of rice annually for five years.

Thailand supplied 251,738.43 MT during the period, or 21.4% of the total, followed by Pakistan with 124,038.5 MT, or 10.5%.

Rounding out the top five were Myanmar and China which shipped 58,080 MT and 4,680 MT of rice, respectively.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has estimated that Philippine rice imports will increase to 4 million MT this year. The estimate, if borne out, would be 11.7% higher than the 3.58 million MT imported in 2023.

However, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said that the imports are unlikely to hit USDA forecast levels due to better-than-expected domestic production. The DA is targeting a palay (unmilled rice) harvest of above 20 million MT.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said that the USDA import estimate was a “worst-case scenario” should domestic rice output be severely affected by El Niño.

— **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/11/587579/rice-imports-hit-1-18-million-mt/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Clark food hub feasibility plan due later this year

April 11, 2024 | 8:42 pm



CLARK International Airport Corp. (CIAC) said it will update the feasibility studies within the year for a food trading hub in Clark City, and expects to award the project to a private-sector partner by late 2025.

The updating of (feasibility) studies will happen this year, as will coming up with the terms of reference for the public tender," CIAC President Arrey A. Perez said at the sidelines of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Food Security Forum late Wednesday.

CIAC is working with the ADB in reviewing the feasibility study as well as the terms of reference for the \$152-million food hub.

The Clark National Food Terminal project is expected to do away with the need for wholesalers and major retailers to travel to Metro Manila to access produce, Mr. Perez said.

CIAC hopes to conduct the public tender for the food hub by next year, Mr. Perez said, with awarding possibly by the third or fourth quarter of 2025.

The proposed national food hub would be built on a 64-hectare site inside the Clark Civil Aviation Complex, Mr. Perez said last year.

The food hub would also house cold storage facilities, as well as key services like research and quality control, warehousing, food processing, international shipping, marketing services, and trading for domestic and foreign markets.

It will also be linked to a railway connected to Subic port.

The hub will also be near the sites of cargo companies FedEx and UPS, as well as satellite agri-trading hubs in northern Luzon.

The complex's logistics access will give producers "the ability to send their products all over the Philippines and even in international markets," Mr. Perez said. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/11/587577/clark-food-hub-feasibility-plan-due-later-this-year/>

REMATE:

Presyo ng palay itinaas ng NFA

April 11, 2024 17:20



MANILA, Philippines- Itinaas ng National Food Authority (NFA) Council ang procurement price ng kada kilo ng palay upang palakasin ang buffer stock ng ahensya at gawin itong mas “competitive” sa merkado.

Sa press briefing nitong Huwebes, inanunsyo ni Department of Agriculture (DA) Assistant Secretary at spokesperson Arnel de Mesa na inaprubahan ng NFA Council ang bagong buying prices para sa palay.

Ani De Mesa, nagkakahalaga ang bagong buying price ng dry and clean palay ng P23 hanggang P30 kada kilo mula sa nakaraang P19 hanggang P23 kada kilo, habang ang fresh palay ay nagkakahalaga ng P17 hanggang P23 kada kilo mula sa nakaraang P16 hanggang P19 kada kilo.

“Ang nabibili ng NFA ngayon ay talagang kokonti,” wika ni de Mesa.

Ayon sa DA official, pumapalo ang national farm-gate price average sa P26.9 kada kilo, habang ang buying price ng NFA ay may maximum na P23 kada kilo.

“Talagang wala siyang mabibili or very minimal so tinaasan nang kaunti para makahabol ang NFA doon sa presyo na ino-offer ng traders sa ngayon,” dagdag ni de Mesa. RNT/SA

<https://remate.ph/presyo-ng-palay-itinaas-ng-nfa/>

ABANTE:

Quick Response Fund ihanda para masakloloohan magsasakang apektado ng tagtuyot



- April 11, 2024

Dapat umanong ihanda na ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang Quick Response Fund (QRF) nito upang matulungan ang mga magsasaka na lubhang maaapektuhan ng tagtuyot.

Ginawa ni AGRI party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee ang pahayag matapos na magdeklara ng state of calamity ang bayan ng San Enrique sa Negros Occidental kaugnay ng nararanasang tagtuyot doon.

Nasa 90% ng palayan sa lugar ay natuyo na at hindi makapagtanim ang mga magsasaka dahil sa kakulangan ng tubig.

Ang San Enrique ay isa sa pangunahing rice producer ng Negros Occidental. Umaabot sa 2,884.75 hektarya ang palayan dito.

"Kailangang i-expect natin na sa darating na mga linggo ay madadagdagan pa ang mga lugar na magdedeklara ng state of calamity dahil sa matinding init at tagtuyot. Kaya dapat siguraduhin ng DA na ready for release at download sa kanilang regional offices ang QRF kapag nagdeklara na ng state of calamity ang mga LGU para naman mabigyan ng agarang ayuda ang mga apektadong magsasaka sa mga lugar na 'yon," sabi ni Lee.

Nasa P1 bilyon ang inilaang QRF ng DA sa ilalim ng 2024 national budget.

Nanawagan din ang solon sa DA at Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) na magsagawa ng cloud-seeding upang mabawasan ang epekto ng El Niño phenomenon.

"Patuloy na mahihirapan ang mga magsasaka sa kanilang produksyon hangga't hindi sapat ang irigasyon. Dapat proactive tayo at hindi reactive dahil buhay at hanapbuhay ang nakataya dito," dagdag pa ni Lee.

Noong Pebrero, nagsagawa ng cloud seeding sa Cagayan Valley na nagdala ng pag-ulan sa rehiyon. (Billy Begas)

<https://tnt.abante.com.ph/2024/04/11/quick-response-fund-ihanda-para-masakloloohan-magsasakang-apektado-ng-tagtuyot/news/>

Quick Response Fund swak sa apektado ng tagtuyot

- Abante Tonite
- April 11, 2024



Dapat umanong ihanda na ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang Quick Response Fund (QRF) nito upang matulungan ang mga magsasaka na lubhang maapektuhan ng tagtuyot.

Ginawa ni AGRI party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee ang pahayag matapos na magdeklara ng state of calamity ang bayan ng San Enrique sa Negros Occidental kaugnay ng nararanasang tagtuyot doon.

Nasa 90% ng palayan sa lugar ay natuyo na at hindi makapagtanim ang mga magsasaka dahil sa kakulangan ng tubig. Ang San Enrique ay isa sa pangunahing rice producer ng Negros Occidental. Umaabot sa 2,884.75 hektarya ang palayan dito.

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Nasa P1 bilyon ang inilaang QRF ng DA sa ilalim ng 2024 national budget.(Billy Begas/Eralyn Prado)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/04/11/quick-response-fund-swak-sa-apektado-ng-tagtuyot/>

MANILA STANDARD

DA unveils country's first mobile plant food safety laboratory

By Othel V. Campos

April 11, 2024, 7:45 pm

The Department of Agriculture (DA) unveiled the Philippines' first Mobile Plant Food Safety Laboratory, a powerful tool to safeguard food quality and sanitation in the country.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the laboratory-on-wheels brings the tools of food safety directly to agricultural communities.

“This enables proactive monitoring and immediate intervention. Its mobility ensures flexibility and accessibility, allowing us to reach even the most remote areas and respond promptly to emerging crises,” he said.

The P20-million mobile van can navigate through remote areas. The mobile lab has a modular set-up that could accommodate rapid screening and testing for pesticide residue, heavy metals and microbiological contaminants from 20 to 30 samples per day at an affordable cost.

The lab is designed to be adaptable and future-proof. New tools can be added to determine and resolve emerging threats.

Tiu Laurel underscored the DA's unwavering commitment to safe food for all Filipinos.

“As we continuously work towards a safer and more resilient agriculture sector, let us not lose sight of the fundamental principle that food safety is not just a task for our government agencies; it is everybody's responsibility,” Tiu Laurel said.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314434784/da-unveils-countrys-first-mobile-plant-food-safety-laboratory.html>

MANILA STANDARD

More areas likely to declare state of calamity amid El Niño — solon

By Maricel Cruz April 11, 2024, 11:05 pm

The Department of Agriculture (DA) should anticipate more areas in the country to be declared under a state of calamity due to drought and allot its Quick Response Fund (QRF) under this year's calamity funds so that it can be immediately tapped and released to aid drought-hit farmers.

Rep. Wilbert T Lee of AGRI party-list group made this statement as the local government of San Enrique town in Negros Occidental declared the municipality under a state of calamity following weeks of rising temperatures, dry weather conditions, and lack of rainfall.

The local mayor says 90 percent of the town's rice fields had already dried up and the farmers could not start replanting due to the unfavorable weather conditions.

San Enrique is home to some 26,000 people and is one of the top rice-producing towns in Negros Occidental. A large chunk of the town's 2,884.75-hectare land area is rice farms.

About 20 local government units (LGUs) have declared a state of calamity due to the impact of El Niño.

“Kailangang i-expect natin na sa darating na mga linggo ay madadagdagan pa ang mga lugar na magdedeklara ng state of calamity dahil sa matinding init at tagtuyot. Kaya dapat siguraduhin ng DA na ready for release at download sa kanilang regional offices ang QRF kapag nagdeklara na ng state of calamity ang mga LGU para naman mabigyan ng agarang ayuda ang mga apektadong magsasaka sa mga lugar na ‘yon (We have to expect that in the coming weeks there will be more places that will declare a state of calamity due to extreme heat and drought. So the DA should make sure that the QRF is ready for release and download in their regional offices when the LGUs declare a state of calamity so that immediate aid can be given to the affected farmers in those areas),” Lee said.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/314434933/more-areas-likely-to-declare-state-of-calamity-amid-el-nino-solon.html>

MANILA STANDARD

NFA ups palay buying price from farmers

By Othel V. Campos

April 11, 2024, 11:20 pm

The National Food Authority (NFA) announced on Thursday it has raised its buying prices for palay (unhusked rice) to a range of P23 to P30 per kilogram (kg) for dry palay and P17 to 23/kg for wet palay to encourage farmers to sell to the government.

The NFA admitted it still has a long way to go to build up buffer stocks in the face of potential rice supply concerns due to El Niño-induced drought.

“Our current prices couldn’t compete with private traders. We need to incentivize farmers to keep planting rice and even expand their rice fields, especially with the harvest season nearing its end,” said Agriculture Secretary and NFA chairman Francisco Tiu Laurel.

The significant jump from September’s P19-P23 price range for dry palay and P16-P19 for wet palay was a decision that underwent much deliberation and discussion.

Private traders currently offer P27 to P30 per kilo for dry palay, while retail rice prices range from P47 to P57 per kilo, depending on location and quality.

The DA asserted that the NFA has already procured some palay for buffer stocks, and aims to buy more before the harvest season ends in May.

The Rice Tariffication Law mandates the NFA to maintain a buffer stock equivalent to at least nine days of national rice consumption.

The NFA is nowhere near the mandated 330,000 metric tons (MT) of buffer inventory which is crucial for food security in case of emergencies.

The NFA cannot buy from outside sources due to an import restriction in the law.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/314434948/nfa-ups-palay-buying-price-from-farmers.html>

THE MANILA TIMES

Magat Dam fish cage project gains headway

By Leander C. Domingo
April 12, 2024

RAMON, Isabela: The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) said its circular high-density polyethylene (HDPE) cage project at Magat Dam gained headway after at least 5 metric tons (MT) of tilapia were harvested in the first cycle of culture period on Thursday, April 11.



BIG HARVEST The circular high-density polyethylene cage project by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Cagayan Valley has paid off, giving handsome dividends to fisherfolk in the area as manifested by the 5 metric tons of tilapia hauled during the partial harvesting in the first cycle of culture period on Thursday, April 11, 2024. A fisherfolk shows freshly caught tilapia at the side of a cage in Magat Dam. PHOTO FROM BFAR REGION 2 OFFICIAL FACEBOOK PAGE

Key officials and representatives from partner agencies and institutions including the National Irrigation Administration, the Isabela provincial government, the local government units of Ramon and Cordon, SN Aboitiz, barangay officials, and members of fisherfolk groups witnessed the partial harvesting of tilapia in Magat Dam.

According to BFAR, the HDPE cage project was in response to fish cage operators in Magat Dam who asked for assistance to revitalize the tilapia industry in this town.

The BFAR Region 2 then awarded 12 circular HDPE fish cages to seven fisherfolk associations in the municipalities of Ramon and Cordon in this province.

The HDPE cage project was stocked with 144,000 pieces of tilapia fingerlings during its first cycle of operation which is expected to yield 21.6 MT of tilapia.

Some 329 members which comprise the fisherfolk associations expressed positive feedback on the performance of the newly introduced aquaculture production system, the BFAR said.

The fisherfolk-beneficiaries associations managing the HDPE cage project in Ramon town are the Magat Lakeside Farmers and Fishpond Operators Association (Malaffoa), Magat Riverside Fisherfolk Association, and Magat Dam Mangalap Fisherfolk Association.

The Cordon town-based fisherfolk-beneficiaries association are the Taliktik Magat Dam Fisherfolk Association, Magat Dam Dallao Fisherfolk Association, Women's Association of Taliktik Magat Dam, and Cordon Mushroom Corn/Cassava Vermi Compost Organic Association.

"Given that our climate is changing, the Magat fishing community will profit immensely from the implementation of this project," said Mel Victorino Valentin, Malaffoa president.

Valentin noted that through this project, the Cagayan Valley region will have an abundant supply of fish at a reasonable price, while the associations will have funding and extra income.

"We are incredibly thankful to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources for this project," Valentin said.

"This is a prime example of how the government supports the fishing sector by granting equitable access to programs and initiatives that promote welfare and development. Indeed, a beneficial impact on the community," Valentin added.

The BFAR Region 2, headed by Director Angel Balisi Encarnacion, explained that the HDPE cages are "widely used because of the versatility of the materials used, its durability and resistance against typhoons, and its relative simplicity in the performance of various farming operations, boasting an extended life expectancy of over 30 years compared to traditional bamboo cages that can only last up to 1.5 years."

These cages are expected to bridge the gap in fish production, especially during typhoons or natural disasters.

The bureau also noted that implementing climate-adaptive initiatives has been its strategy "to sustain fisheries production in the region, especially during adverse weather conditions caused by climate change."

"As the primary government agency responsible for the production of fisheries commodities for consumption and various other purposes, the DA-BFAR [Region 2] has strategically embraced technology demonstration interventions and other relevant projects," the bureau said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/12/regions/magat-dam-fish-cage-project-gains-headway/1941050>

NFA Council okays higher palay buying price range

- [Andrea E. San Juan](#)
- [April 12, 2024](#)
- THE National Food Authority Council on Thursday approved a higher buying price range for palay to give the government corporation the “flexibility” to compete with private traders in securing supply and help rice farmers earn more from their harvest.
- In a statement on Thursday, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said the NFA Council, led by Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr., raised the NFA buying price to a range of P23 to P30 per kilo of clean and dry palay, and P17 to P23 a kilo for wet and fresh palay to reflect higher prices in the market amid worries over rice supply due to drought caused by El Niño.
- The NFA’s policymaking body last raised the buying price to a range of P19 to P23 per kilo of dry palay and P16 to P19 per kilo of wet palay in September last year.
- “At our current buying price, we cannot compete with private traders. And we only have three weeks before the harvest season ends,” said Tiu Laurel.
- “We need to ensure that our farmers make money to encourage them to continue planting and even expand the area planted to rice,” he added.
- Based on the Rice Tariffication Law, NFA said it needs to maintain a national rice buffer stock equivalent to at least nine days consumption, which now stands at 330,000 metric tons, to cover requirements in case of disasters and other calamities.
- The Rice Tariffication Law does not allow NFA to import rice or trade in agricultural commodities, and requires it to source its buffer stock from local rice farmers, DA noted.
- “Traders are buying dry palay from farmers within a range of P27 and P30 per kilo,” DA said.
- Meanwhile, it noted that the retail price per kilo of rice ranges from P47 to P57, depending on the area and quality of the national food staple.
- The Agriculture chief said the NFA procured a certain amount of palay to boost buffer stocks and is looking to buy more before the end of the harvest season ends in May.
- DA said Tiu Laurel also noted rice stocks remain “sufficient,” especially with initial reports of “good rice yield” despite El Niño.

- Meanwhile, DA noted that the NFA Council also approved guidelines for the disposition of aging buffer stocks, giving priority to government agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and those left to be sold to the private sector through an auction using price based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/12/nfa-council-okays-higher-palay-buying-price-range/>

BUSINESS MIRROR

High inflation spurs ADB to cut PHL growth outlook

- [Cai U. Ordinario](#)
- [April 12, 2024](#)
- HIGH inflation that could result from extreme weather events and pricey logistics costs prompted the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to reduce its growth expectations for the Philippines this year.
- In its latest Asian Development Outlook (ADO), the Manila-based multilateral development bank said the country's GDP growth is now projected to average 6 percent from the September and December 2023 forecast of 6.2 percent.
- However, inflation estimates averaged 3.8 percent this year, better than the 4-percent outlook in September and December 2023. For 2025, the ADB estimates that growth will average 6.2 percent and inflation will average 3.4 percent.
- "It's [downward revision in growth estimate] basically [due to] an upside risk to inflation, mainly how the extreme weather events affect the agricultural production, the food prices that can affect the inflation in the Philippines, as food has a strong weighting of nearly 40 percent in the consumer price index (CPI) in the Philippines," ADB Philippine Country Office Principal Country Specialist Cristina Lozano explained in a briefing on Thursday.
- Lozano said the recent increase in shipping cost as a result of disruptions in the Red Sea, will also have an impact on inflation, particularly on food prices.
- In the All Income Household CPI, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data showed food items have a weight of 34.78 percent. This is much higher for the bottom 30 percent of households at 51.38 percent.
- "The second reason (shipping costs) is mainly external headwinds coming from a slower growth in advanced economies that are (linked to) commercial relations with the Philippines, the US, and Japan, that weigh on the regional outlook in general, but also in the Philippines in particular," Lozano said.
- However, the ADB said recent efforts made by the national government to contain inflation have worked in the country's favor.
- This included the appropriate response of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) to maintain inflation and adopting a hawkish stance on monetary policy.
- Lozano also said the reduction of rice tariffs, extended to the end of the year, will also reduce the cost of rice imports and contain inflation.
- It may be noted that under the CPI, rice has a weight of 8.87 percent for the All Income Households and as much as 17.87 percent for the poorest households.

- Asian Development Bank (ADB) Philippines Country Director Pavit Ramachandran told reporters in a briefing on Thursday that one crucial aspect of the economy that is helping boost growth is infrastructure.
- Ramachandran said the national government has sustained infrastructure spending at 5 to 6 percent from the previous administration to the current administration.
- Ramachandran said large infrastructure spending will help sustain the country's growth of 5 to 6 percent, consistent with the national government's targets.
- He noted that the 185 flagship projects, a quarter of which will be undertaken via Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) will not only help keep the deficit in check, but also increase investments in the country.
- "These will be crucial for driving, boosting productivity, competitiveness, connectivity in the Philippines. The labor market continues to be quite favorable," Ramachandran said.
- "Other favorable indicators include the expansion in manufacturing activities, and this is borne out of the Purchasing Managers Index," he added.
- In a statement, ADB said developing economies in Asia and the Pacific are forecast to expand by 4.9 percent on average this year as the region continues its resilient growth amid robust domestic demand, improving semiconductor exports, and recovering tourism.
- Inflation is expected to moderate in 2024 and 2025, after being pushed up by higher food prices in many economies over the past two years.
- Inflation in developing Asia and the Pacific is expected to decline to 3.2 percent this year and 3 percent next year, as global price pressures ease and as monetary policy remains tight in many economies.
- "We see strong, stable growth for the majority of economies in developing Asia this year and next," said ADB Chief Economist Albert Park. "Consumer confidence is improving, and investment is resilient overall. External demand also appears to be turning a corner, particularly with regard to semiconductors."
- Policy makers should remain vigilant, however, as there are a number of risks. These include supply chain disruptions, uncertainty about US monetary policy, the effects of extreme weather and further property market weakness in the PRC.
- Rice prices have contributed to higher food inflation, especially for import-reliant economies. Prices for rice are likely to stay elevated this year, according to ADO April 2024.
- Reasons include crop losses due to adverse weather and India's restrictions on rice exports. Increased global shipping costs, due to attacks against ships in the Red Sea and drought in the Panama Canal, may also add to inflation in Asia, according to the report.

- To tackle surging rice prices and protect food security, governments can give targeted subsidies to vulnerable populations and enhance market transparency and monitoring to prevent price manipulation and hoarding.
- In the medium to longer term, policy should focus on establishing strategic rice reserves to stabilize prices, promoting sustainable farming and crop diversification, and investing in agricultural technology and infrastructure to raise productivity. Regional cooperation can also help manage rice prices and their impact, the report says.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/12/high-inflation-spurs-adb-to-cut-phl-growth-outlook/>

ABANTE TONITE

Quick Response Fund swak sa apektado ng tagtuyot

- April 11, 2024

- Dapat umanong ihanda na ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang Quick Response Fund (QRF) nito upang matulungan ang mga magsasaka na lubhang maapektuhan ng tagtuyot.
- Ginawa ni AGRI party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee ang pahayag matapos na magdeklara ng state of calamity ang bayan ng San Enrique sa Negros Occidental kaugnay ng nararanasang tagtuyot doon.
- Nasa 90% ng palayan sa lugar ay natuyo na at hindi makapagtanim ang mga magsasaka dahil sa kakulangan ng tubig. Ang San Enrique ay isa sa pangunahing rice producer ng Negros Occidental. Umaabot sa 2,884.75 hektarya ang palayan dito.
- “Kailangang i-expect natin na sa darating na mga linggo ay madadagdagan pa ang mga lugar na magdedeklara ng state of calamity dahil sa matinding init at tagtuyot. Kaya dapat siguraduhin ng DA na ready for release at download sa kanilang regional offices ang QRF kapag nagdeklara na ng state of calamity ang mga LGU para naman mabigyan ng agarang ayuda ang mga apektadong magsasaka sa mga lugar na ‘yon,” sabi ni Lee.
- Nasa P1 bilyon ang inilaang QRF ng DA sa ilalim ng 2024 national budget.(Billy Begas/Eralyn Prado)

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